

80p

DRIVE BLAIR OUT!

Global anti-war movement

DESPERATE BLAIR CHURNS OUT MORE LIES

Where was he?

BLAIR SAYS that there are “no marches for the victims of Saddam”.

He is either ignorant or a liar. There was, for example, an emotional protest in London in 1988 over the gassing of 5,000 Kurds in the village of Halabja.

Peace campaigners, trade unionists and left wing supporters of the Kurds were there. Among them was George Galloway, the leading anti-war MP today.

Not one member of the present government showed their face.

Bloody sanctions

TONY BLAIR says there will be “blood on the hands” of opponents of the war, as stopping it will simply mean civilian deaths through economic sanctions.

It is the US and British governments themselves that are imposing the sanctions.

Blair is saying we either let him bomb Iraqi civilians or he will ensure that they starve to death.

He and fellow warmongers know they are murdering the innocent.

The then US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was asked in 1996 about sanctions killing half a million children in Iraq. She said, “On balance, it’s a price worth paying.”

The guilty men

THE ROTTEN record of the West in Iraq does not stop today’s warmongers saying that at least now we will make good the “mistakes” of previous governments.

But the lunatics now in the White House are precisely the men who “made the mistakes” in the 1980s.

Bush’s defence secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, visited Saddam Hussein in Baghdad in 1983 to seal US government arms deals.

Working for the same government were today’s vice-president, Dick Cheney, and the Dr Strangelove character Richard Perle.

Now we are told these people have become a force for morality.

Last time round

THE LAST Gulf War was bloody, immoral barbarism.

The US air force slaughtered Iraqi conscripts who, defeated, were retreating from Kuwait and were on the road to Basra in Iraq.

Pilots called it a “turkey shoot”.

In the war the US deliberately targeted civilian infrastructure, such as sewage treatment works, that could not possibly have any military value.

The use of cluster bombs and “fuel air explosives” (which suck the air out of people’s lungs) led at least five British army officers to resign in disgust.

This time US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld and other officials have refused to rule out the use of nuclear weapons.

Famine threat

THE WAR will bring a humanitarian catastrophe to Iraq, according to a secret United Nations (UN) planning document.

The report, drawn up by top UN agencies and bodies such as the World Health Organisation, predicts nearly 1.5 million people will be driven out of the country by an attack.

One in three children under five “would be at risk of death from malnutrition”.

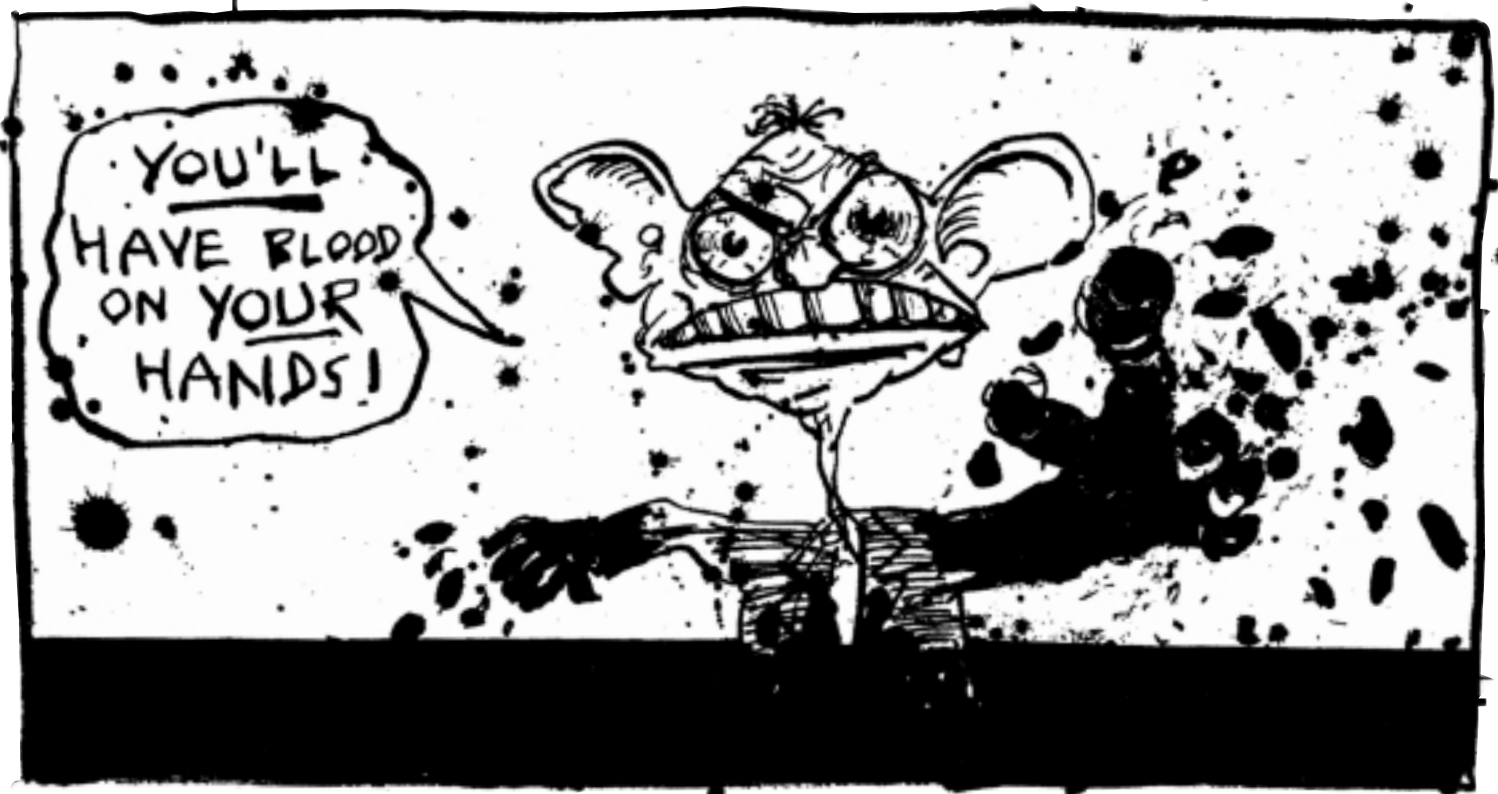
The document also says that, despite aid agencies’ pleas for resources from the US and Britain, “no funds have been available to any agencies to date”.

Aggressive move

TURKEY BEGAN moving large numbers of troops to its border with Iraq within hours of a deal at the NATO summit on Sunday.

The Turkish army is the second largest in NATO. The deal at the weekend has nothing to do with “defending Turkey”. It is about allowing it to go on the offensive when the war starts.

It has already stepped up repression of its own Kurdish minority.



How dare he talk of morals?

WITH THE majority of the world’s population opposing war, Tony Blair now says that people don’t understand the “moral case” for attacking Iraq. It is another lie born of desperation.

Blair said of last Saturday’s anti-war demonstration, “If there are one million, this is still less than the number of people who died in the wars he [Saddam] started.”

He didn’t mention that the bulk of the people killed by Saddam Hussein died when the Iraqi leader was backed by the US and Britain.

The US and Britain supported Saddam when he launched war on Iran in 1980.

That war killed about one million people. The US and

‘The US and Britain supported Saddam when he launched war on Iran’

Western governments armed Saddam Hussein, including with chemical weapons.

Saddam Hussein, buoyed by US support, used poison gas against the Kurdish minority in the north of Iraq in March 1988.

The US and Britain did not protest.

They carried on arming him.

And how dare Blair talk of morals when in the last Gulf War the US and Britain killed at least 200,000 Iraqis?

The sanctions they have imposed on Iraq since then have killed over half a million Iraqi children.

The war Bush and Blair plan now will be murderous. And it will not bring freedom or democracy to people in Iraq.

The US has made clear it will impose a military regime on the country, and has agreed with Turkey a plan for its troops to seize northern Iraq.

The reasons for war on Iraq have nothing to do with morals, democracy or humanitarianism.

There are plenty of regimes in the Middle East which are every bit as brutal and undemocratic as the one in Iraq. Yet Bush and Blair have no plans to fight for democracy and human rights in countries like Saudi Arabia or Egypt.

The key ally of the US and Britain in the region is Israel, which has defied more United Nations resolutions than any other state, and which is the only Middle Eastern state proven to have nuclear weapons.

Israel’s leader, Ariel Sharon, is a war criminal, even condemned by an Israeli tribunal as responsible for the massacre of Palestinian civilians in Lebanon in 1982.

Global press baron Rupert Murdoch dictates much of what Blair’s government does and says.

Last week Murdoch let slip the real reason for war on Iraq.

“The greatest thing to come out of this would be \$20 a barrel for oil,” he said. “Once Iraq is behind us the whole world will benefit from cheaper oil.”

Regime plan

THE US has ditched the pretence of introducing democracy in Iraq, say Kurdish leaders who met White House officials last week.

Instead it plans to occupy Iraq and replace Saddam Hussein and a handful of bureaucrats with US military officers while keeping the rest of the repressive state machine intact.

“Conquerors always call themselves liberators,” says Same Abdul Rahman, an official in the Kurdish administration in northern Iraq.

“It is very disappointing. In every Iraqi ministry they are just going to remove one or two officials and replace them with US military officers.”

The rival Kurdish factions that run northern

Iraq are far from being “anti-US” forces.

But even these corrupt leaders now say the US has done a deal with the government of Turkey to allow it to seize northern Iraq in a war and prevent any moves to set up an independent Kurdish state.

The US wants to stop any popular uprising that could bring radical change in Iraq and across the Middle East.

Its firepower would be combined with the remnants of the Iraqi army to prevent that happening.

A retired US general is already lined up to take over running Iraq.

Lieutenant General Jay Garner was recently appointed to a new Pentagon office already dubbed the “government in waiting”.

Immoral record

THE US is the world’s biggest military power and has the largest amount of nuclear weapons.

From 1960 to 1975 the US pounded Vietnam. It used more bombs than all sides put together in the Second World War.

The US killed over two million people. It poured the chemical weapon Agent Orange onto the country. Children are still born today with deformities because of that poison.

From 1981 to 1990 the US sent the CIA in to train, arm and finance a right wing terrorist organisation, the Contras, in the Central American country of Nicaragua.

The Contras bombed, tortured and raped ordinary people. Tens of thousands of people were killed.

In 1983 the US invaded the Caribbean island of Grenada to overthrow a government it saw as hostile to its interests.

The US bombed the Libyan capital, Tripoli, with British help in 1986.

Hundreds of bombs fell on residential areas and hospitals, killing hundreds of people.

The US invaded Panama, another Central American country, to overthrow its ruler and former US ally General Noriega.

Bombs were targeted at residential blocks. In 24 hours the US military killed at least 2,500 people.

Case studies

WE HAVE heard talk of war bringing peace, democracy and freedom from Western governments before. What has been the result?

●**AFGHANISTAN:** US and British forces still occupy the country, which is torn between rival factions.

Journalist Robert Fisk reported in January, “A few months ago we would still have been asked to believe the post-war ‘success’ in Afghanistan augured well for the post-war success in Iraq.”

He talks about “the near collapse of peace”.

Fisk describes “the anarchy in the cities outside Kabul, the warlordism and drug trafficking, and steadily increasing toll of murders”.

●**KUWAIT:** The country is run by the al-Sabah family. Most people who live in the country don’t even have the right to vote.

Human Rights Watch has reported, “More than 100,000 long term residents of Kuwait faced widespread and systematic discrimination.”

The Kuwait regime denies any rights to the Bidun people. Women activists are still struggling for the right to vote.

We can get regime change in Britain

THE DEMONSTRATIONS last Saturday have plunged Tony Blair into the biggest political crisis of his life.

Every commentator knows it. Blair knows it.

For days the media has been filled with attempts to understand the demonstrations, and speculation about whether Blair can ride out the storm.

Now we have to cause such turmoil that Blair is forced from office.

If we don't shift Blair, we allow him to ignore democracy.

An opinion poll this week showed a huge leap in the number of people against military action on Iraq.

It is, as the *Guardian* said, "a significant personal failure for Tony Blair in his attempt to persuade British public opinion".

Over the same period support for the war has slumped to 29 percent from 39 percent.

"What was a one-point gap has become a 23-point chasm between the two sides of the debate," says the *Guardian*.

One Labour MP told newspapers last weekend, "It is now a firm view right across the Labour Party that Tony Blair is finished because of his refusal to listen to overwhelming opposition to war with Iraq."

Most of the media claimed that Blair and Prescott's calls for the party to back war were well received at Labour's spring conference in Glasgow.

But the *Financial Times* reported, "Labour activists greeted John Prescott's call to rally round the party line on Iraq with the same stony silence accorded to Tony Blair's defence of military action the day before."

"Ministers looking out through the glass walls of the conference centre at the thousands of anti-war marchers chanting outside admitted the mood of the country was against them."

Foreign secretary Jack Straw admitted this week that it would be "very difficult indeed" to go to war if most people were against it.

We need to make the opposition even more terrifying to Blair and his circle.

We can't rely on anyone else to oppose the war. Leaders of other



WHERE WERE anti-war protesters banned from marching and threatened by riot police?

In New York, within sight of the United Nations headquarters.

Police hemmed protesters in. At one point officers charged

with batons into a group because they weren't staying on the pavement.

Brian Campbell, from Left Turn, was at the protest.

He reported, "Over half a million people converged on the freezing streets of New York City

to tell Bush that ordinary Americans want no part of his war on Iraq.

"The numbers were so large that after a few hours the New York Police Department's elaborate barricade system that forced protesters to walk for

miles before they could join the protest was torn down and protesters took over the streets.

"Protesters enjoying the carnival atmosphere merged with groups representing political causes and trade unionists. A large

contingent of Palestinian supporters rallied at the Israeli consulate before joining the demonstration.

"There were 71 feeder marches. All were in violation of the police department's no-march order—but it was powerless to stop them."

countries may cynically change their position at any time.

Most MPs will focus on the next party conference or after the next general election as the time to challenge Blair.

Action is needed now—on the streets, in the workplaces and the colleges, as we detail on page 5.

The trade union leaders must be pressured to start acting, not just talking, against the war.

After the First World War the TUC

passed a rule which states, "In order that the trade union movement may do everything which lies in its power to prevent future wars, the general council shall, in the event of there being a danger of an outbreak of war, call a special congress to decide on industrial action, such congress to be called, if possible, before war is declared."

That should happen immediately.

The trade union leaders should cut off all funds to the Labour Party and withdraw all resources for the

forthcoming elections.

They should encourage and organise militant action by their members.

Many union leaders have rightly said that war on Iraq would be mass murder. That is surely enough of an emergency to go beyond the limits imposed by the anti-union laws.

Last Saturday was a watershed. It is time to go even further.

We need a more powerful movement and a stronger political alternative to New Labour.

A growing movement

THE MASS protests last weekend across the world were a turning point in global politics and the birth of a new movement.

Over 20 million people were so enraged and horrified by the threat of war on Iraq that they took to the streets.

In country after country they stripped away the pretence that government leaders have any sort of popular support when they back war.

The demand for peace came from every continent.

It gave a glimpse of how people can be united across boundaries and how we can overcome all the divisions that our rulers try so hard to impose.

This is the power that can stop war.

But the protesters' strength, imagination and determination also gave a glimpse of a movement that can reshape the world so that people come before profit.

That's why we have devoted the bulk of this issue of *Socialist Worker* to those protests, and how we can build that movement.

WAR ON IRAQ... FIREFIGHTERS...

Where is New Labour going?

Speakers: George Galloway MP, Bob Crow RMT general secretary*, Christine Blower former NUT president*, Mark Serwotka PCS general secretary*, John Rees Socialist Alliance, Linda Smith London region FBU treasurer (*personal capacity)

**MONDAY 3 MARCH, 7.30PM,
FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON**

The war shapes every struggle

LAST SATURDAY'S great demonstration was one of those "once in a lifetime" events which it would be hard to find anything to match.

One of the few that begin to compare—in my experience at least—was the million-strong anti-war march that concluded the European Social Forum (ESF) in Florence on 9 November last year.

Just as in London last weekend the mood on that demonstration was of defiance and celebration.

And the ESF itself launched the call for a Europe-wide day of action against war on Iraq.

All in all, then, Florence was an important benchmark in the development of a worldwide movement against capitalism and war. Not for everyone, however.

The latest issue of the *New Left Review* journal carries an interview with Bernard Cassen, till recently president of ATTAC France and still very much the dominant figure in this very influential movement against corporate globalisation.

Looking forward to future social forums, Cassen says:

"The issue of war will be very important, but it will not be as dominant as it was in Italy, at the European Forum in Florence, where it overshadowed everything else."

He goes on to say this is to be explained by the nature of the movement in Italy, characterised as it is by the convergence of anti-capitalist networks, the Partito della Rifondazione Comunista and, increasingly, the trade unions:

"Knowing that the forum would be held in Italy, and that Rifondazione would mobilise around the issue, we all agreed that war would be a leading theme in Florence, alongside its original theme: 'We Need a Different Europe.'"

"But then we discovered that all the posters for the march spoke only of war, without mentioning Europe."

"But if the forum had been held in France, it would not have gone like this. War would have been on the agenda, but not an obsession with war."

The next European Social Forum (ESF) will be in Paris, in the suburb of Saint Denis, in November. So Cassen's comment is a prediction of how, if he gets his way, the Paris-Saint Denis ESF will differ from the one in Florence.

Cassen gives two reasons for his attitude. One is that the French context is different from that in Italy (or Britain).

President Jacques Chirac is, as we all know, opposed to an attack on Iraq and this makes it hard to build an anti-war movement in France.

I've always found this argument—which is quite common on the French left—puzzling. During the

ALEX CALLINICOS says fighting world poverty must mean opposing Bush's war

1960s Chirac's predecessor General de Gaulle fiercely opposed the Vietnam War and withdrew France from NATO in protest against US hegemony.

This didn't prevent the development of a massive anti-war movement.

Cassen's second argument is more interesting: "Whether war breaks out or not, B-52s and special forces will not alter poverty in Brazil or hunger in Argentina."

This is a classic case of what the great Russian revolutionary Lenin called "economism".

Often those who want to reform capitalism believe that its economic faults can be separated from the political system, and that the state can be pushed into remedying these defects.

But this is an illusion. The state—and indeed the entire international system of states—are part of capitalism.

When the domination of the multinational corporations is threatened, the military violence of the state is used to shore the system up.

We saw this in a small way at Genoa in July 2001 when the riot police ran wild to crush the demonstrators against the G8 summit.

But it is also true on a global scale.

The Bush administration's war drive is precisely about not merely reinforcing the global domination of the US, but continuing to force through the neo-liberal measures that are breeding "poverty in Brazil or hunger in Argentina".

Many of the tens of millions of demonstrators around the world last weekend understood much better than Cassen that economic and military power are very tightly bound up in modern capitalism.

The B-52s and special forces are there to maintain a system responsible for poverty, unemployment and environmental destruction.

For that reason, challenging the imperialist war machine is a central part of the movement for another world.

If Bernard Cassen tries to sideline resistance to war at the next ESF, he will have a big fight on his hands.

inside the system

Bush's barmy buddies

IF YOU think George Bush is mad, wait until you see his crazier supporters.

Over 4,000 conservative activists in the US met recently in Arlington, Virginia, at the conference of the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC).

The delegates heard vice-president Dick Cheney, Oliver North and other right wing heroes.

Many wore "Fry Mumia" T-shirts aimed at the black activist who is fighting against his death sentence for a murder he didn't commit.

Others held up "Give war a chance—peace through superior firepower" posters.

CPAC hates a lot of things, especially "Black Marxism", "the homosexual agenda", the former president Bill Clinton, environmentalists and Islam.

★ THE deluge of anti-French propaganda in the press has provoked a response in Paris.

The newspaper *France Soir* has published a series of anti-English jokes.

The best of them are excellent, and our favourite one is the following.

Q: How do you find a train in London? A: Follow an ambulance.

British army's link to terror

MINISTERS REACTED with horror last week when it was suggested that MI5, the army and others had talked up the "terrorist threat" at Heathrow airport.

The defence and security services are strictly non-political in such matters, we were told.

How embarrassing then that just a day later came confirmation of conspiracies and subversion by just such people.

A British army brigadier and up to 20 other soldiers and police officers may be prosecuted for working with Loyalist terrorists in Northern Ireland.

Brigadier Gordon Kerr could be accused of conspiracy to murder.

The revelations are part of the inquiry

by Sir John Stevens into the murder of Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane.

The Ulster Defence Association (UDA) shot Pat Finucane.

It was supplied with crucial information about Finucane by people in the army's top secret Force Research Unit.

Brigadier Kerr headed this unit and recruited former soldier Brian Nelson to infiltrate the UDA.

Nelson scouted Finucane's house and passed on his photo to his killers.

Questions remain about just how much the Stevens inquiry will expose.

Although it has already given us a glimpse of the army's bloody role, there are fears that it may leave hidden an even higher level conspiracy.



Driven from home and then she died

PENNY-PINCHING Gloucestershire social services moved a woman of 88 from her nursing home to save the council £12 a day.

Her doctor warned the council that her life expectancy would be "considerably reduced" if she was moved. He was ignored.

She died five days after leaving her old home.

Violet Townsend was moved from the home

where she had lived for eight years when it raised its fees to £463 a week.

The council moved her to another home five miles away that charged £394 a week.

After she had a stroke in 1992 Violet had found it difficult to make herself understood due to the effect on her speech. But staff at her nursing home had learned how to communicate with her.

Is this justice for Jimmy Hall?

DEMOLITION firm Brown and Mason has been fined £40,000 for the death of one of its workers at Blyth power station.

Jimmy Hall, aged 21, died in May 2001.

Tony Blair had given the firm a personal commendation for its commitment to safety.

Brown and Mason has a £12 million contract to

demolish the station.

The assistant site supervisor Richard Brown was a member of the family that runs the firm. He was not trained properly.

Brown cut a wire supporting a junction box that fell on Jimmy Hall.

"The £40,000 is nothing to a firm that size," said Pat Henderson, Jimmy Hall's mother.

SPIES SENT OUT TO COUNT BRAZIER

FIRE BOSSES have been accused of spying on firefighters during the recent strikes.

London Fire Brigade launched the undercover Operation Firewatch mission by employing plain-clothes workers at the security firm Group 4 to visit fire stations during strike days.

This is said to have cost £10,000 a day.

The Group 4 employees were to report back on how many pickets and fire engines were there, what

fundraising was taking place and if the firefighters had petitions.

Bosses also wanted to know whether firefighters had braziers and banners, and if TV crews were there.

"This is an outrageous waste of money," says a FBU firefighters' union source.

"Management don't have money for new equipment and training—£10,000 is half the pay of a firefighter for a year. This is something the chief fire officer has to answer for."

Research shows the war is wrong

OPPOSITION TO war is running deeper every day.

Researchers who work for Labour MPs have set up a Researchers Against War group.

The group says, "This is an opportunity to express opinions that might not concur with those of your employer."

"A regular Monday

night meeting will soon commence to discuss campaigns."

"It is unprecedented for researchers to organise themselves against a political issue—and against the party line—in this way," says one researcher.

"Heaven knows what will happen if they down tools."

THINGS THEY SAY

"THE AXIS Of Weasel."

■ NEW YORK POST on Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder

"FRANCE and Germany have finally responded to Iraq's flagrant violation of United Nations disarmament orders by mounting an offensive. Yet the target of their campaign is not Saddam Hussein but the US."

■ WASHINGTON POST

"CHEESE-eating surrender monkeys."

■ "JOKE" about the French repeated by US politicians and media pundits

"THE US should come up with an anti-French strategy."

■ US adviser RICHARD PERLE

"WE ARE doing this for one reason only—to harm the German economy. Why should we continue to support a country which has treated NATO with such incredible contempt?"

■ PENTAGON SOURCE on Donald Rumsfeld's plan to impose unilateral sanctions on Germany

"THE AIM is to hit German trade and commerce. It is not just about taking out the troops and equipment, it is also about cancelling commercial contracts and defence-related arrangements."

■ Another PENTAGON SOURCE

"WELL, IT looks like we moved a step closer to war. Not with Iraq, with France and Germany."

■ US chat show host JAY LENO

"THERE'S A thrilling energy to politics here that has withered away higher up."

■ Times journalist KATE MUIR describing a Marxist forum in Hackney

DO YOU have a story for Inside the System? Send it to Inside the System, Socialist Worker, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH.

All readers who send in a story that is printed are put into a monthly raffle for a book.

After the biggest demonstration in British history

The next step



Picture: MATT SAYWELL

Act quickly

‘THE demonstration has had a profound effect. Now we have to build on it, and quickly.

We want people to go back and organise in every area. We need thousands of local Stop the War groups, in workplaces, colleges, on every street.

We need grassroots organisation. Where I live pubs and shops have anti-war posters.

In towns and villages where there have never been political movements there is a chance to build this kind of activity too.

Everyone can do something—organise in your area, do leafleting, poster, organise local rallies and demonstrations, sit-downs.

We must increase the pressure on the government. If Blair does dare to go to war despite the opposition then we are asking people to prepare to do specific things:

●We want people in workplaces to strike against war.

●In the colleges we want people to occupy buildings if war starts.

●In every area we want people to occupy the town or area centre. In London we plan to occupy the whole of the Westminster and Whitehall areas.

We want every day that war goes on to see mass civil disruption.

We need to make sure that if Blair goes to war then the whole country will erupt in a wave of anger against him.’

LINDSEY GERMAN, convenor Stop the War Coalition

AT LEAST one person from each of 1.25 million households in Britain marched last Saturday, according to a survey in the *Guardian*.

They showed on the streets the anti-war feeling of the clear majority of the population.

The biggest demonstration in British history must now give birth to a gigantic movement if we are to stop this war.

In workplaces, schools, colleges, and localities in even the smallest towns in Britain there are people who marched and many more who know the government is wrong.

The three stories at the foot of this page show how such people could be drawn together before the great demonstration.

That happened in a minority of areas before Saturday. Now much more is possible, and it can happen everywhere.

Speed is of the essence. We have days to galvanise the anti-war mood and organise it.

It must be organised to counter the torrent of pro-war propaganda from the government and most of the media.

In every area people need to be able to answer the latest lie or scare story.

If up to two million people can march in London, then thousands can harry every government minister wherever they go.

Hundreds can descend on the surgeries of MPs who refuse to speak out against the war. Their silence equals consent for slaughter.

And if Blair dares take us to war alongside George Bush, defying world opinion, there must be a wave of civil disruption across Britain to stop it.

Normality cannot reign while they bury democracy and kill in our name.

Such a revolt cannot happen without organisation. What everyone does over the next two weeks will determine what actions are possible.

There need to be meetings in each area to plan what to do following the demonstration.

The anti-war feeling is such that meetings of people from just a few streets or a couple of tower blocks draw unprecedented numbers of people and are the best way of involving the most people.

In many universities and

what we think

colleges there already are Stop the War groups.

That now needs to spread to every site, hall of residence and course. It is a similar story in schools.

In further education and sixth form colleges lecturers and teachers can help students organise meetings.

More people oppose the war and more want to do so actively now than before Saturday's march.

Most trade unions are against the war.

People opposed to the war need to be drawn together in groups in every workplace.

A plan of action to oppose the war should be agreed at every union branch.

Organising now is the key to the road blockades, walkouts and college occupations that can make it impossible for Blair to pursue war.

Millions of individuals do not want to stand idly by while Blair goes to war.

As individuals we are powerless. Saturday showed what can be achieved when we come together.

Now that lesson needs to be taken into every corner of Britain.

Stop the War Coalition

020 7053 2153/4/5/6
or go to
www.stopwar.org.uk

Spain

‘MORE THAN 4.5 million people demonstrated in Spain last Saturday. That's 10 percent of the population taking part in over 350 marches.

There were over one and half million people in both Barcelona and Madrid. That is 30 percent and 25 percent of the populations of those provinces! These are by far the biggest demos in Spanish history.

The figures coming in from all around the country are incredible. There are reports of

250,000 in Seville, 150,000 in Granada, 70,000 in Cadiz, 500,000 in Valencia, 200,000 in Oviedo, 160,000 in Bilbao, and many more.

The picture above shows the 70,000 who marched in Malaga.

Even the Canary Islands towns of Las Palmas and Santa Cruz had 100,000 and 60,000 each.’

EN LUCHA (*In Struggle*), Spanish sister paper of *Socialist Worker*

Picture: PA PHOTOS/EPA

IN YOUR WORKPLACE

‘I WORK in the council house, the town hall, in Birmingham. I organised video showings over the war before the demonstration.

I got a copy of a *Panorama* programme and of the Rory Bremner show from the local Stop the War Coalition.

I'm a Unison union rep, and the union supports the anti-war movement. Because it was backed by the union I was able to book rooms and use video equipment.

I got the union office to photocopy leaflets and posters. I put leaflets in people's pigeon-holes. I also got a couple of people to help and we gave out leaflets outside offices.

Until a few days beforehand there were only a few people booked on coaches from the

council, but in the end we got two coachloads!

We have contact sheets from the coaches, so we can get in touch with people who went.

Now I want to see if I can get hold of a video of Saturday's demonstrations and have a meeting in the council.

I spoke to people at work on Monday morning about the demo.

I talked about how we should organise walkouts if war starts. If you'd asked me a few weeks ago I'd have thought that no way would people be willing to do that.

But I was really surprised. People said yes, that's a good idea, maybe we should. Now we have to organise to see if we can do it.’

NIMITA SRIVASTAVA, Birmingham

IN YOUR COLLEGE

‘I'M A student in University College London. It's not a college with a big tradition of militancy, but things have really taken off with the anti-war movement.

Since last September we got activists together. At first there were about ten to 15 of us. But we ran stalls, organised meetings.

We got lecturers to help book rooms. We collected money to pay for photocopying. We got a motion passed at a student union meeting that it should support our activities.

We signed up people on stalls to an e-mail list which

now has hundreds on it.

There must have been 400 or 500 from the college on Saturday's demo. That has really shifted the mood.

We were meeting this week to discuss what next.

We'll continue stalls and meetings. We are going to organise a night with bands and music to raise funds.

We passed a motion in the student union meeting that if war breaks out then we will immediately boycott lectures. We want people to walk out of lectures and hold a teach-in.’

VIREN SWAMI, University College London student

IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

‘EVERYONE CAN build a local Stop the War group. In the streets in Dalston in east London where I live I started on my own a few weeks before the demo.

I contacted a local community centre/cafe and got a time when we could meet there. I made a very basic leaflet on my computer.

I photocopied around 200 and put them through people's letterboxes on two streets around where I live.

There is a cinema nearby so I asked if I could leave some there too, and in the community centre.

At the meeting 13 people turned up, all from the local area.

We got a map of the area out and people agreed to leaflet all the streets. We got people putting up posters as well.

We decided to meet each Tuesday in the cafe. In the run-up to the demo we ran a stall at a local shopping centre every Saturday, and leafleted the railway station.

We've had around 40 people in contact with each other. Almost all have never been involved in political activity before.

There are lots of people who must have gone on the demo from around here who we don't know.

So we are planning to have a video showing and to advertise it so we can reach them and get more people involved in activity locally.

We are also organising to take action if Blair and Bush go to war—things like blocking local roads at key junctions and doing banner drops.’

SUE JONES

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Picture: ANGELA STAPLEFORD

MORE AND more people are enraged at Blair's pro-war policy

This time Tony Blair has gone too far for us to stay

I HAVE just written to Tony Blair with the following message: 'DEAR PRIME minister, My family has Labour roots going back to the beginning of the Labour Party. To witness the disintegration of a once proud party into the spineless shadow of its former self fills me with horror. I can no longer associate myself with a party which advocates: (a) an unprovoked invasion of Iraq, which offers no threat to our homeland, and the murder of innocent civilians; (b) Tony Blair becoming the foreign minister for the US and no longer prime minister of this

country; (c) forgetting this country is in Europe and is not another state of America; (d) threats of legislation by John Prescott against the firefighters, mirroring what Thatcher did to the miners; (e) university education only for the rich and those from private schools. You no longer have my vote.' Louise Littlefair Preston

● I HAVE been an active member of the Labour Party for 14 years. I have never had great illusions that it was going to make huge strides towards socialism, but I thought it was the best defence against the

Tories and real brute capitalism.

But over the war I just can't go on thinking that. Blair could have headed up a European opposition to Bush which would have halted the war in its early planning stages.

Instead he has cleared the way for bloodletting on a terrible scale. I am not at all sure in which party progressive people in Britain should now be organising.

I do know that it's not New Labour. I do know that it's urgent that there's a home for everyone who marched on Saturday. Barry Thomas East London

● MEMBERS OF Strathclyde Fire Brigades Union (FBU) lobbied the councillors of Strathclyde Fire Board last week.

Twelve firefighters have indicated that they will be standing against Strathclyde Fire Board members at the forthcoming local elections.

The FBU cannot condone their intentions. However, we fully appreciate and understand the frustration and anger they feel towards their local representatives, as a result of the lack of support from them over the current fire service dispute. Strathclyde FBU

Change the mood about refugees

MANY POLITICIANS and much of the media have spent the past few years demonising asylum seekers. This has helped to make the BNP Nazis seem legitimate. It is vital that we build the "Don't vote Nazi" campaigns and the Anti Nazi League's "Love Music Hate Racism" events. But we must also take up the arguments about housing, services, etc, particularly in relation to asylum seekers. The war against asylum seekers has begun to make racism respectable, and is being used by racists to regain ground that they lost after the Stephen Lawrence campaign. In my workplace I have collected over three pages of signatures and £40 so far for the open letter to defend asylum seekers. This has led to many

discussions. Our union branch is also reissuing a "Defend asylum seekers" leaflet to all members explaining the arguments within the workplace. Although not everyone has agreed with me, everyone has voiced concerns at what the Nazis are doing and disagreed with the linking of asylum seekers with terrorism. If we take the statement round we can give confidence to some people, persuade others and begin this vital debate with the rest. This is important for all of us involved in the anti-war movement, the Socialist Alliance, the anti-capitalist agitation and supporting workers' struggles like the firefighters. Ade Walter Greenwich council worker

Let's plan what action we need

SOCIALIST WORKER is right to say we need demonstrations but that we need to go beyond demonstrating. It is not enough to hope this happens—it needs to be organised. In a spirit of peace and cooperation, can I make a few suggestions about what might be appropriate so that we can begin a discussion: ● If war breaks out, block roads, march and protest, but also occupy a public building (council office or government department?) and STAY THERE. ● Get walkouts at work wherever possible. ● Stop paying tax wherever possible. It's hard to avoid VAT and

income tax, but you can cancel your council tax payments, etc. ● Ring, e-mail, or fax every government minister, department, councillor, etc who supports the war and keep ringing. If 100,000 people do this we will cause real problems for the communications system. ● On the first Saturday after an attack, take over the centres of towns, and cities, and halt normal business—not marches but angry protests that are not going to go away! I'm sure people have even better ideas than these, but let's have a clear idea of what we're doing so we can do it together. Jerry McFarlane by e-mail

Israel matters

THE GUARDIAN and Evening Standard newspapers ran articles before last Saturday's demonstration claiming that supporters of Palestinian rights had tried to hijack the protest. Nothing could be further from the truth. Justice for Palestine is inextricably linked to stopping the war. That is why Israeli leader Ariel Sharon outdoes even Tony Blair in his enthusiasm for an attack on Baghdad. Nothing exposes the hypocrisy of our leaders more than their attitude to Israel. UN resolutions must be obeyed or else you risk devastating war—unless you are Israel. Weapons of mass destruction must be dismantled—unless you are Israel. You cannot occupy your neighbours' land—unless you are Israel. Mike Simons East London

YOUR VIEW

Starry-eyed on the US in space

MARTIN EMPSON (Letters, 15 February) points out that the recent space shuttle explosion may have links to cost-cutting. True.

But we should argue for the biggest cut of all—abolish the space programme.

It is not some disinterested piece of pure research which benefits humanity. It is (and always has been) essentially a military project.

The shuttle programme will help to make Star Wars and "first strike" nuclear war a possibility. Most of the satellites launched into space have military uses.

Lockheed Martin, the main shuttle contractor, is also a major weapons maker.

When we have socialism we can think about whether we want a space programme. For now, we don't. Helen Wilson Birmingham

Directions for the bomb aimer?

Now I understand. The Labour campaigning slogan "Schools and hospitals first" is a snappy forewarning of its bombing strategy for Iraq. Andrew Garner by e-mail

Most people are not rabid racists

RECENT MEDIA coverage of events in our town, Saltdean near Brighton, has focused on the protests against a plan to accommodate asylum seekers at a local hotel.

These reports fail to represent the views of the majority of local residents.

A recent meeting saw a cross-section of the Saltdean community discuss how we could



Unity not division

promote a positive view of refugees to our neighbours, and plan activities to welcome and support asylum seekers when they arrive.

We welcome support from all those appalled by the hysteria surrounding the asylum issue. Professor Raphael Salkie, Chana Moshenska and Rebecca Shtasel PO Box 2536, Rottingdean BN2 6LX

Who could have sold Iraq nukes?

THE US plans to use 3,000 precision-guided bombs and missiles in the first 48

hours of an attack on Iraq. Yet there's no evidence of Iraq possessing nuclear weapons. The only way Saddam Hussein could have built underground nuclear arsenals was if the last Bush administration supplied them to him in the first place!

Jon Langton West Midlands

Prescott didn't put up a fight

MEMBERS OF Hull Stop the War Campaign have branded deputy prime minister John Prescott a coward after he apparently refused to discuss the Iraqi crisis with them during a recent demonstration outside his home.

We had formed a "weapons inspection



Pulled his punches

team" and had hoped to gain entry into the home to look for evidence of weapons of mass destruction.

The police banned us from using a megaphone, and they even arrested one of the weapons inspection team.

Geoff Collier Hull

Not just black and white today

AS SOCIALISTS in the SWP I think we need to look a little more closely at ourselves, what we're doing and why we're doing it.

Nothing in life is black and white, and things aren't often as clear cut as we would like.

None of us are as good as we can be and we do not have all the answers. Admitting this isn't a sign of weakness but a display of our strength.

Alex Gunn Manchester University SWSS

Scandal behind the grandstand

BEHIND ALL the fanfare of the opening of the cricket World Cup in South Africa there is a story the world has not heard.

Cape Town city council has allowed the organisations that run the Newlands cricket ground (hosts of the opening ceremonies and opening game of the World Cup) to get away with unpaid municipal bills in the order of R4 million (£400,000).

But at the same time the council is evicting poor black families from their homes in nearby Mitchell's Plain for having arrears of as little as R250 (£25).

Peter Dwyer Durban

GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION London



PEOPLE CONVERGED on Hyde Park from all over Britain

Two million march

IT WAS the biggest march in British history, and that's official.

Only once before have such numbers been on the streets—back in 1945 when millions partied to celebrate the end of the Second World War.

Last Saturday up to two million marched in London to protest against another war.

From Hyde Park back down the Thames to St Paul's and north up to Euston Station, there was a sea of placards and banners.

For many this was the most important event that they'd taken part in.

Many demonstrators had made their own placards. They showed the sharp politics and humour many marchers brought with them.

Bush was portrayed as an oil baron and a cowboy, Blair as a poodle or as an attack dog. One protester was pushed round the march on a trolley

bed with "Beds not Bombs" daubed on it.

They showed the incredible mixture of people on the protest: "Fortismere school against the war", "Sk8ters against war", "Wisbech against war", "Notts County supporters say make love not war".

I saw only a couple of placards that put their faith in the United Nations.

Hundreds came on specially chartered trains from Manchester and Liverpool.

Others packed onto coaches, hired minibuses, brought cars and even cycled to get to the march.

The demonstration had to set off early due to the numbers of people.

They stood for hours in the freezing cold, but no one complained because the waiting signalled one thing—a protest that surpassed all their hopes.

People were full of anger at the possibility of a horrific war being unleashed by their government in their names.

But there was also a sense of celebration and joy that so many had turned out.

People were fuming at a prime minister who will not listen to them and will spend billions on war while the health service crumbles. They demanded an end to war and an end to Blair.

"How is bombing kids going to bring about democracy?" said Sue from Sheffield.

"I've got a grandchild, and when I look at him I think of the kids the US and Britain are going to bomb in Iraq.

"Blair is arrogant. The people who got him into power are marching today—we can easily get him out."

Some newspapers say the demonstration was "Middle England on the march".

But designer-suited businessmen from commuter land and vicars from the Shires were few and far between.

The march was made up of council workers, students, teachers, postal workers, engineers, pensioners—exactly the sort of people the Labour Party could once rely on for votes and support.

It included many trade union members who had come with local anti-war groups.

Isabel was marching with other members of the Communication Workers Union.

She said, "Thousands of people are against war. Blair is not listening to us, but that's not an excuse for not standing up for what is right. It makes it more important."

Rail workers with their Aslef

union banners spoke of their excitement at hearing how train drivers in Motherwell refused to move munitions trains.

Saturday saw multicultural Britain on the march. There were similar numbers of Muslim demonstrators to those on the anti-war march last September. They were more spread out among the huge crowd.

Everywhere along the march were students and school students.

"There are ten of us from our school in this contingent," said Nesh from Woodhouse Sixth Form College in North Finchley, London. "Loads more are coming later. The people in power don't have our interests at heart."

Listening to speeches in Hyde Park, many felt that the experience of being on a massive demonstration had changed them.

Kath, a drama student from Scarborough, attended the march with her two sisters and her mother.

"You get a gut feeling of the power that we have when we all get together. It's an emotional feeling.

"Today shows that no matter where people are from we can come together to make our voices heard."

"I'm a Unison union steward," said Alan Newham of the Northgate and Prudhoe Health Unison branch.

"We are here to reflect the feeling of our members who say that any war is unjust.

"Great numbers influence people in power. I hope it frightens them to death.

"It's only when ordinary people come into the streets that we can see that real power lies with us."

Thousands of people across Britain organised a march that made history. It was a dream for those who joined in—and a nightmare for Tony Blair.

Judy Cox

The heart of the protest

THERE WERE queues all day at dozens of Stop the War Coalition stalls as people signed up to join, plan further action and discuss what they could do next.

An hour at a Stop the War Coalition stall on the Strand gave some indication of who had turned out.

"I'm a teacher from Wrexham," said one woman. "I want to give a whole day over for the sixth form to discuss the issues arising from the war."

She was one of two dozen teachers who approached the stall.

Also signing up were large numbers of council workers, people who worked in the NHS, and school and FE students.

There were people from all walks of life.

They were the kind of people you meet on the high street on Saturday—most of them were working class people.

Well over half of them said they had voted Labour at the last election. Of the others, most had not voted and a smaller number had voted for the Liberal Democrats.

No one owned up to voting Tory.



Picture: ANGELA STAPLEFORD

GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION Glasgow



Picture: DUNCAN BROWN

ANGRY FIREFIGHTERS formed part of the great Glasgow demonstration

The resistance surrounds Blair

IN GLASGOW last Saturday Tony Blair fled from the anti-war anger that swept towards Labour's spring conference. Around 100,000 people marched through Glasgow to the exhibition centre where the Labour Party was meeting. It was the biggest demonstration in the city since the 19th century.

Tony Blair was scheduled to speak at 2pm—the demonstration was scheduled to be outside the centre to meet him.

Instead Blair sneaked into Glasgow at 10am, spoke to a closed meeting and scurried off before the march began.

Margaret Thomson was on the march, carrying the "Sighthill United Against War" banner.

"Blair's run away," she said. "He's scared to face people protesting against the war. He's just following Bush around like a dog."

"Never mind taking out Saddam—I think we should get rid of Bush and Blair."

Thousands came from the smallest corners of the country—70 crossed over on the ferry from the town of Rothesay, 60 more came from the island of Arran.

In Arbroath, on the east coast, the coaches were full. Dundee sent 12 coaches down. Monifeith School in the city booked its own coach. More than 1,000 travelled by coach from Aberdeen.

Trade union banners flashed and bloomed in the bright winter sunshine. The firefighters from north west Merseyside and Cheshire had sent six people to Glasgow and 60 to London.

Steve, a firefighter from Cathcart in Glasgow, said, "We're lobbying the Labour Party against this immoral war. There are a lot of angry firefighters here today."

The banners and flags announced that every group of workers was represented.

When Jimmy Reid, one of the key figures in the workers' occupation of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders, spoke at the final rally he recalled the march in support of their fight for jobs. That was in 1971, and 80,000 marched on that day.

Some of the trade unionists on the march were delegates to the Labour Party conference. They had planned to stage a walkout when Blair began to speak and join the march.

Instead they had joined the demonstration from the start. There were a dozen or more banners from constituency Labour parties.

When one delegate tried to get into the conference wearing a stop the war T-shirt he was thrown out.

Khushi Usmani, from the West End of Glasgow, said, "I feel ashamed because I voted for Labour, and I've been a member of the Labour Party for umpteen years. I feel

"Thousands came from the smallest corners of the country in a tremendous display of what people feel about the war on Iraq"

ashamed that Blair doesn't listen to his party members and even Labour MPs."

The march brought an enormous range of people together.

From the South Side of Glasgow a feeder march of 500 grew to over 1,000 as it drew in more and more young people, many of them Muslims.

In May Scotland faces parliamentary elections. The Labour Party and its leader, Jack McConnell, will not be able to deny their complicity in Blair and Bush's war plans.

After the great Scottish demonstration they know what the majority of working people in Scotland want—no war.

"It's been an important opportunity for each and every one of us to understand what 100,000 people represents," Tommy Sheridan, the Scottish Socialist Party MSP, told the final rally.

"According to the World Health Organisation, after the US and the UK drop 800 cruise missiles in two days on the people of Iraq, the number of civilian casualties is estimated at between 100,000 and 500,000."

"Look around you—look at ordinary people who you've never met before, from all walks of life. Look at each and every one of those ordinary citizens who are the equivalent of the people who are going to lose their lives in Iraq if we allow this war to begin."

Brian Quail of Scottish CND said:

"We are not the appeasers. We are the resistance."

Any war won't be in our name, the marchers said with their horns, their whistles and their colourful banners. For one young mother, there with her two children, this was a time to be angry but also to celebrate. "This is what globalisation should be," she said. Mike Gonzalez, Dave Sherry and Mark Brown

GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION Millions on

The day the world said no to war on Iraq

Picture: PA PHOTOS

CAPE TOWN, South Africa

IT WAS the day the world said no to Bush's war. Demonstrations took place in over 60 cities and towns. The numbers of demonstrators far surpassed the most optimistic forecasts of ten million. In some countries people marched in their millions or hundreds of thousands.

In others they defied ruthless regimes, all backed by the US, to take to the streets. It wasn't only in Britain that records were broken. There were huge demonstrations across Europe.

Spain saw the biggest demonstrations in its history. Norway's capital, Oslo, had its biggest ever demonstration. Marchers in Australia numbered nearly a million for the first time.

Over half a million people marched in France. There were demonstrations in 80 different cities, the biggest of which was the 200,000-strong march in Paris.

There were demonstrations tens of thousands strong in the Danish capital, Copenhagen, in Stockholm and Gothenburg in Sweden, and in the Swiss capital, Berne.

There were demonstrations across Eastern Europe, where governments are defying most of their populations to support Blair and Bush.

Thousands marched in

JOYOUS UNITY

PROTESTS against the war brought people together across entrenched divides in some countries.

In Belfast Catholics and Protestants marched together. In Cyprus a protest at a British military base was supported by people from both Turkish and Greek communities.

Poland, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary and Slovakia. Smaller protests took place in Russia, Ukraine and other areas of the former USSR.

In India over 10,000 people protested in Calcutta.

In the Far East there were protests in the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, South Korea and Japan.

Axis under pressure

THE BIGGEST demonstrations took place in the very countries whose governments George Bush is relying on to back war.

Spain's Jose Maria Aznar and Italy's Silvio Berlusconi are the two Western European leaders who have united with Blair to back Bush's war.

Blair, Aznar and Berlusconi have been nicknamed the BAB axis. They are for war, and for privatisation and neo-liberal policies across Europe.

Aznar cooked up the statement earlier this month which all three leaders used to try to rally the rest of Europe behind Bush.

The big majority of

people in Britain, Spain and Italy are against war. The demonstrations on Saturday show the potential to drive the warmongers out of office in each country.

Over 80 per cent of the population in Turkey, a key launching pad for an invasion of Iraq, say no to war.

There were huge demonstrations in Germany and France. That has put more pressure on those two governments not to fall in behind Bush by voting for a pro-war resolution in the United Nations Security Council.

After last weekend's demonstration the government can ignore the global anti-war revolt that will intensify if Bush attacks Iraq.

Middle East is raging

TONY BLAIR likes to quip that while people are allowed to protest in Britain, in Iraq opposition is brutally crushed.

His fake concern for democracy does not extend to the pro-Western dictatorships elsewhere in the Middle East.

Ten Egyptian anti-war activists are in prison, held under a law that allows for indefinite detention without trial or even being charged. All have been tortured.

Police broke up an attempted anti-war march last Saturday. Activists fear the beginning of a clampdown in preparation for the war.

But state savagery cannot hide the boiling anger across

the Middle East at Bush, and at Israel's attacks on the Palestinians.

People defied security forces to demonstrate in the Gulf state of Bahrain.

A huge demonstration swept through Beirut, Lebanon, uniting ethnic and religious groups.

Some 80,000 people joined a demonstration in Damascus, Syria. The regime said it supported the march, but many of those taking part want change in Syria too.

Register solidarity with Egyptian activists. Phone 07986 220 64 or e-mail findjonathan@hotmail.com

SOUTH AFRICA

"UNDER THE banner of the Anti-War Coalition, 20,000 people took to the streets of Johannesburg in South Africa on Saturday singing, toying and chanting with a single message: "No to war against Iraq!"

We marched to the offices of the US consulate-general where speakers addressed the crowd.

They attacked Bush and Blair, and also criticised the South

African government for allowing US and UK warships on their way to Iraq to dock in Durban harbour.

On Saturday thousands also demonstrated in Cape Town and in Durban.' Anti-War Coalition, South Africa

HOLLAND

"OVER 100,000 people marched in Amsterdam in Holland on Saturday. There was a real festive atmosphere, but also

the streets of over 600 cities in 60 countries

CANADA

“FROM QUEBEC City to Vancouver, Ajax to Whitby, ordinary Canadians in their tens of thousands took to the streets to say “No to war”. Over 300,000 people marched in all.

Montreal and Toronto, Canada's two biggest cities, hosted the largest protests, with 150,000 taking to the streets in Montreal and 80,000 in Toronto.

On the Pacific coast 40,000 marched in Vancouver and 8,000 in Victoria. On the Atlantic coast 4,000 marched in Halifax. In all over 70 cities held protests, most in temperatures of minus 35C.

Canada's Labour Party, the NDP, has shifted under the pressure of the anti-war movement, and now says it opposes war with or without the UN.

The movement is also moving the government.

Liberal Party prime minister Jean Chretien had been preparing Canada's military to support war in Iraq.

Suddenly he shifted and lectured the US about the dangers of unilateral war.

Now students plan an anti-war strike on 5 March, and action is planned everywhere if war starts.”

MICHELLE ROBIDOUX, Canada

ROME, ITALY

Protests in Bush's back yard Coordinating global movements

JUST TWO weeks ago there were no plans to hold a demonstration in Uruguay on 15 February.

After the Porto Alegre World Social Forum the small group around Globalise Resistance Uruguay decided to call for a demonstration against the war.

On Saturday some 10,000 marched through the capital city of Montevideo.

This is in a country whose population is just a little over three million!

Elsewhere in Latin America, a continent on the sharp end of the neo-liberal policies championed by the US, there were massive anti-war protests.

In Mexico City up to 10,000 people marched. Protests also took place in smaller cities such as San Cristobal, Monterrey and Veracruz.

In the Venezuelan capital, Caracas, up to 5,000 people joined an anti-war march. In Chile, a member of the UN Security Council,



RIO DE Janeiro, Brazil

3,000 people marched to the presidential palace in the capital, Santiago.

In Brazil 30,000 people marched in Sao Paulo and 15,000 in Rio de Janeiro.

MAS (Movement Towards Socialism) reports from Buenos Aires in Argentina, just across the River Plata from Montevideo, “People braved a violent storm to take part in a 30,000-strong demonstration that stretched over a kilometre through the streets of Buenos Aires.

“We marched behind the slogan ‘No to the imperialist

war against Iraq’.

“This is the biggest demonstration on an international issue the city has seen since the 1973 coup in Chile.

“Taking part were the ‘Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo’ [relatives of those murdered during the 1970s military dictatorship], various trade unions, students, Arab and Islamic organisations, people from the popular assemblies, workers from occupied factories, and people from the unemployed ‘piqueteros’ organisations.”

MOST OF the world's media is mystified at the scale and coordination of last Saturday's protests.

They tapped mass popular opposition to the war, but the 600 protests did not take place by chance.

“We first raised the idea of international action in the wake of the 400,000-strong anti-war demonstration in Britain on 28 September,” says Chris Nineham of the anti-capitalist group Globalise Resistance.

He is also part of the co-ordination of the European Social Forum, which brought together anti-capitalists and other groups at the huge event in Florence, Italy, in November.

“We brought the idea up at one of the planning meetings for Florence,” says Chris.

“There was considerable controversy. Some delegates were worried it would alienate the mainstream of the movement.

“We, alongside the Italian delegates, had to put up a strong fight to get it accepted.



BEIRUT, LEBANON

“But at the forum itself opposition to the war had mass appeal.

“It was the main theme of the closing activists' meeting, which issued the call for 15 February.

“European delegates raised the idea at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, last month.

“We organised an anti-war assembly and nearly 1,000 people came along.

“It was from that that the protest on 15 February turned global.”

There are sure to be further debates about how to take the movement to stop the war forward.

In Greece and Germany, for example, leading figures from the governing parties joined the protests.

But they hope to curtail the anti-war demonstrations if their countries' leaders end up reluctantly backing Bush through the United Nations.

In France there are differences of opinion over the way forward for the anti-war movement.

Some put faith in President Chirac to stop the war through the UN.

Others rightly see that the movement on the streets is crucial and must be built stronger.

The international movement is growing, and becoming more radical and coordinated.

There will be a global anti-war coordinating meeting in London on 1 March.

ITALY

“THE MARCH set off two hours early. An hour before the start time the square at the end of the march was already full. It holds a million people.

There were 30 specially chartered trains to get people to Rome. The whole of the city felt like one big demonstration.

Who knows how many marched? It's impossible to tell when it's over three million.

The march drew in far wider forces than the left. There is already talk of what to do now.

Radical union groups have called for strikes if war breaks out. There is pressure on the equivalent of the TUC to call something. It's a real possibility.”

TOM BEHAN, Rome

GREECE

“THE ANTI-WAR rally in Athens was huge, with up to 300,000 taking part.

Speakers at a rally all attacked the aggression against Iraq and demanded that the Greek government stopped giving any support to the war.

After the concert and speeches we marched to the US embassy.

The demonstration was lively, with chants, bands, slogans and hundreds of banners.

Older demonstrators said, “It is like the 1970s”—the period after the collapse of the military junta. We all felt very powerful.”

SEK (Socialist Workers Party), Greece

al anger.

The Dutch government supports Bush, though there is a majority against war.

It was the most international demonstration ever in Holland. The rally started with a special welcome to both Iraqi refugees and to American activists.”

epijn Brandon, Holland

HUNGARY

ABOUT 60,000 people demonstrated in Budapest in Hungary

against war on Saturday. The slogans were “No to the war! Another world is possible!”

On the day of the demonstration the Hungarian authorities were asked by the US to put railway lines and highways at the disposal of US military transports.

The Civilians for Peace movement has asked the government to reject this request.

We also demand the national assembly vote name by name to see who

is for war.’ Civilians for Peace, Hungary

AUSTRALIA

“ONE OF the earliest of the many Australian anti-war rallies taking place last weekend occurred in Bellingen in New South Wales.

An estimated 2,500 people attended the rally at the town's sports ground, where they were entertained by The Bushbombs, an a capella group of singers who



MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA Picture: ADRIAN DAVIES

sang original songs as well as a traditional welcome tune from Nigeria.

Bellingen, a small rural community, nestles in a valley about 15 kilometres from the Pacific Ocean. About 2,600 people live in the township of Bellingen, itself. So the rally was about as large as the town in terms of population!”

Pip Wilson

■ For more on Australia see page 12.



GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION ‘We were everywhere’

‘IN TURKEY there were demonstrations in Istanbul, Adana, Ankara, Izmir, Zonguldak, Izmit, Antalya and Mugla. In Istanbul thousands marched in a lively demo. Around half the demo was made up of Kurds who were protesting at both the war on Iraq and attacks on the Kurds here, which have increased with the drive to war.



There were many arrests before the protest. Police stopped “dark looking people” from using transport to get to the march. Their objective was to stop Kurds from attending, carrying placards in Kurdish, or referring to the Kurdish issue. There were clashes with police at assembly points.

After the rally all the speakers on the platform were arrested, but later released. Those arrested included two stars of Turkey’s most popular TV comedy show. In Friday night’s episode the TV family had announced that they were going to the demo.

At the Turkey-Ukraine football match on Thursday a young unemployed man ran onto the pitch with a banner saying “War means unemployment—no to war”.

The prime minister and foreign minister were there and smiled uneasily as the *entire* stadium chanted “No to war”.

On Saturday night the “one minute darkness” campaign started. At 8pm every night people turn their lights off for a minute as an anti-war protest. People go out onto their balconies and bang pots and pans, or hold local marches. There were many such marches in Istanbul on Saturday night.’

ANTIKAPITALIST, Turkey

‘CONGRATULATIONS from Luxembourg for the great success of the London demonstration.

We too had a big success in our protest. It was the biggest peace demonstration in Luxembourg’s history.

We were 14,000 united for peace and justice!’

JEAN-LAURENT REDONDO, Luxembourg

‘UP TO 150,000 people crammed the streets of Dublin against the war on Saturday in the biggest political demonstration for generations.

It was headed up by trade union banners. Other contingents included local groups of the Irish anti-war movement, samba bands and street theatre.

Coachloads of protesters arrived from around the country including contingents from Waterford, Galway and Cork.

University student Orla said, “In my



college we have been building for weeks. The turnout is much bigger than we ever expected. This show of opposition should make Irish taoiseach (prime minister) Bertie Ahern think again about allowing US warplanes to use Shannon airport.”

The demonstrators heard a call for a ten-minute work stoppage immediately any US-led war on Iraq begins.

Meanwhile in the North, Belfast saw the largest demonstration of its kind in history, as 20,000 people turned out in the city to oppose war.

Scores of banners from political, trade union and other organisations brought colour to the protest.’

SOCIALIST WORKER, Ireland

‘AUSTRALIA WAS engulfed by the biggest demonstrations in its history last weekend.

Almost one million people joined in protests in towns and cities right across Australia.

This means that around 5 percent of the entire population demonstrated.

There were four demonstrations of 100,000 or more.

The largest of them was in Sydney, where between 300,000 and 500,000 took part.

The massive size of the protests has thrown the Tory government of John Howard onto the defensive.

Along with Tony Blair, Howard is one of Bush’s most reliable allies.

Howard has dispatched warships, fighter jets and troops to the Gulf.

This is despite polls showing that as little as 6 percent of the Australian population support the drive to war.

In Sydney a feeder march of 10,000 trade unionists joined with the main demonstration.

Unions in Melbourne have agreed to walk off the job for a mass lunchtime rally if war goes ahead.’

JARVIS RYAN, International Socialist Organisation, Australia

‘AROUND 3,000 people braved their way to the US embassy at Jalan Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur.

The demonstration was illegal. People were advised not to participate and told that the police would take stern action



against those who did.

The warning did not deter the thousands who came to the streets today.

The demonstration was unique. There were Muslims and non-Muslims side by side, anarchists, socialists, democrats, liberals and Islamists. The slogans and chanting were in many different languages.

All united in opposing the war against Iraq and calling for world peace.’

PARTI SOSIALIS, Malaysia

Voices from the world’s biggest anti-war protest

‘OVER 30,000 people took to the streets of the Austrian capital, Vienna, in our biggest anti-war march ever.



What a beautiful front of this march! The “Stop the War” banner made by the Austrian Social Forum was carried by members of the Arab community, mixed with trade union contingents from public sector workers, metal workers, railways and chemical workers.

“This system is rotten,” we heard over and over again. Many school students were convinced that we have to fight the system that breeds war.

A new anti-capitalist generation shaped a historic day.’

LINKSWENDE, Austria

‘WE WERE over 1,000 on Jan Palach Square in Prague. There were many different people—young activists, parents with children, old people, foreigners from the whole world. It was something new in Prague.

There were music and speeches and then we moved to the residence of the Czech government. We handed in petitions. Then we marched to the US embassy where people chanted, “George Bush is the real terrorist.”

Similar protests took place in Brno and Ostrava, the two biggest Czech cities after Prague. The Czech government is supporting Bush.

Lots of protesters carried home-made banners.’

SOCIALISTICKA SOLIDARITA, Czech Republic

‘OVER 20,000 people marched against war on Iraq last Saturday in towns and cities around New Zealand.

It was the biggest anti-war mobilisation since Vietnam, a huge leap forward for the movement.

Anti-war actions were held in more than 20 centres across the country, with massive marches in Auckland and Wellington.

In Auckland, 10,000 people rallied, marched and chanted their way through the city centre. “No blood for oil, on Iraqi soil!” rang out as the huge march forced police to shut down all four lanes and the entire length of Queen Street.

People were still leaving the starting point as the march reached a rally in Myers Park several kilometres away.

In Wellington march organisers were forced to lead the protest past the planned end point as the crowd of 5,000 people was too big to fit in the park.

After an anti-war concert in Auckland on Sunday hundreds marched to the prime minister’s residence.

As they marched, tired but ecstatic, they were chanting “Send the MPs off to war. Give their houses to the poor!”’

GRANT BROOKES, New Zealand

‘MORE THAN 40,000 anti-war protesters packed the narrow streets of the Swiss capital, Berne, on Saturday.

It was one of the most important national demonstrations since the Second World War. More than 90 percent of the Swiss population oppose the Bush-Blair imperial war.

Also on 31 January here 4,000 young people went on strike and demonstrated from the US embassy to the UN in Geneva. They called for nationwide stoppages and demonstrations if Bush and Blair go ahead with their criminal war plans.

The Swiss anti-war movement does not consider Saturday’s demonstration to be an end—it’s a great beginning.’

PIERRE VANEK, Berne

‘THERE WERE about 5,000 people in Shibuya, one of the most popular towns among young people in Japan. There were ever more people who watched our march on the streets and from the shops.

A dramatic day, with younger people coming for the rally against war on Iraq.

In other parts of Japan many rallies and marches were also held. Around US military bases here we had US war veterans joining protests.

We in Japan are really learning to be part of the world.’

OTSUKA TERUYO, Japan

‘COLD WEATHER and rain didn’t stop around 1,000 Maltese people joining millions around the world protesting.

We assembled with banners, posters, drums and flags. “Enough Is Enough” from the band Chumbawamba came from the sound system.

Activists left all our differences behind to shout with one voice against war. Sounds of unity from the speaker system challenged the dull, sad sky and people danced in the streets.

Afterwards an anti-war concert was held in the capital. Valletta.’

MOVIMENTO GRAFFITI, Malta

‘MORE THAN 800 people marched in a vibrant and lively demo called by the Stop the War Alliance at the British army base in Dhekelia, Cyprus.

The choice of the location was made because of the role of the bases during the coming war on Iraq, but also because it borders with the northern and southern sides of the island.

The demonstrators barred the military runway for an hour and using white paint they wrote on the asphalt roadway of the air lane “NO WAR”.

From there the demonstrators marched on to Pyla village where there was a giant screen showing via satellite the great mobilisations in the various capitals of the world.

There were difficulties in communication with the northern Turkish part of Cyprus, due to the political situation. But a few Turkish Cypriots who managed to make it, together with Turkish Cypriots living in the mixed village of Pyla, joined in the demonstration.

It was the first time that Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots have taken part together in an anti-imperialist demonstration.’

WORKERS DEMOCRACY, Cyprus

‘THE BIGGEST demo ever in Oslo, the capital of Norway—more than 60,000 people.

On the streets on Saturday you could not see anyone who was not part of the huge anti-war demonstration.



There wasn’t even enough space for everyone in the biggest square, where the demo was starting, so people filled all the streets around shouting, dancing, singing, jumping and clapping.

They were part of a global protest. They could feel they were making history.

There were 15,000 protesting in both Bergen and Trondheim, and 10,000 in Stavanger too, as well as smaller protests in at least 30 towns across Norway.

More than 100,000 marched in Norway in all on Saturday—making it the biggest protest since 1917.

The vice-chair of the LO [the Norwegian TUC] was one of the speakers. He said, “Bush only cares about American oil interests”.’

JON SANDVEN, Norway

‘HALF A million people flooded the streets of Berlin in the biggest peace demonstration in post-war Germany.

Demonstrators carried self made placards saying “No war” and “No blood for oil”.

“This war is not about justice. The Iraqi people will not be liberated—they will be bombed into bits. This demonstration shows that the warmongers are isolated, not the peace movement,” says Jenny, a school student from Berlin.



Willi is a pensioner from the east German town of Görlitz: “I’m very proud to be part of this global movement against war. I support Gerhard Schröder’s stance against the war. But he should not only talk against the war, but do something—shut down the US military bases in Germany.”

LINKSRUCK, Germany

Socialist Worker thanks everyone who sent in reports and pictures

GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION Rally in Hyde Park

Political speeches got loudest cheers

HYDE PARK was filled with people as far as the eye could see listening to speech after speech attacking Bush and Blair's drive to war.

Hundreds of thousands of people stood in the freezing cold for four hours intently listening to the speakers at the rally.

Some of the biggest cheers were when speakers attacked imperialism and the war for oil, spoke against Israel's oppression of the Palestinians and called for Blair to go.

Tariq Ali was cheered when he said, "If one country needs a regime change at the moment it is Britain."

"New Labour leaders said we would never win the support of the majority of the country against their so called humanitarian wars."

"We're here to say, on behalf of the majority of Britain, that it is Tony Blair and his frightened cabinet which speak for the minority."

"When his MPs return to their constituencies and see the TV news, they will begin to worry what will happen at the next election."

"Don't let the movement stop here. We've got to carry on and we've got to punish the warmongers, in the elections if necessary."

"In this crisis it is necessary to bring down a prime minister. Bring Blair down!"

Around the park there were chants from the crowd of "Bring Blair down! Bring Blair down!"

Tony Benn got one of the biggest cheers of the day

"This is the biggest demonstration ever in Britain," he said.

"This is the first global demonstration."

"Its first cause is to prevent a war on Iraq. But there must be other causes."

"It must be about the establishment of a Palestinian state."

"It must be about achieving democracy not only in the Middle East—and there's no democracy in Saudi Arabia—but also, dare I say it, some democracy in Britain as well."

"If there are weapons inspectors in Iraq, I'd like to see inspectors in Israel. I'd like to see inspectors in America."

"The money wasted on their weapons of mass destruction should be diverted for food, clothes, housing, schools and hospitals, to protect the sick and disabled."

Every time a speaker mentioned oil and imperialism, there was a huge cry of

'This democracy Bush and Blair want to impose stinks of petrol'

agreement.

The campaigning lawyer Imran Khan said, "It is totally wrong when Bush and Blair suggest this is a clash of civilisations."

"This is about the rich against the poor."

"It's a war between the haves and the have-nots. It's a war about oil. It's a war about empire."

Ahmed Ben Bella, former leader of Algeria, spoke at the rally, saying, "Every year 35 million people die of hunger in the world. That is terrorism. And that is what must stop now."

"Mr Bush and Mr Blair are lying when they say this is a war for democracy. You can't bring democracy by bombing people."

"This democracy Mr Bush and Mr Blair want to impose stinks of petrol."

Power

Dilwah Kahn, from the Islamic Forum, was applauded when he said, "This is a war based on US power to colonise the Middle East for its oil."

And Labour MP George Galloway got a massive response when he said, "We don't want a government playing 'Mini Me' to the Doctor Evils in Washington."

"Blair acts as if he was the 51st governor of the United States of America."

"We don't want Bush's war. We don't want Star Wars."

"And we don't want to be in an axis of evil with Israel's General Sharon either."

"I say to Mr Blair that if, despite this great demonstration and the overwhelming feeling today against war, he takes Great Britain over the cliff with George W Bush then he will break the Labour Party."

"If Mr Blair breaks the Labour Party, there will be some of us ready to rebuild it out of the wreckage as a real Labour party standing for real values and standing for peace in the world."

■ Other speakers included Green MEP Caroline Lucas, former Labour cabinet minister Mo Mowlam, speakers from the Muslim Association of Britain, Jesse Jackson and Bianca Jagger. The rally was rounded off with a brilliant anti-imperialist poem and performance by Ms Dynamite.



SOME OF the marchers who filled Hyde Park at the rally

Union leaders urged action

"BLAIR, IT'S time to go! Blair, it's time to go!"

Those chants rang out around Hyde Park after a powerful speech by Mick Rix, the leader of the Aslef train drivers' union.

He was cheered when he praised the action of the train drivers in Motherwell who refused to move armaments trains.

Rix said, "Today we have a new optimism. We can challenge American colonialism."

"The TUC should be recalled to debate the war and for workers to have a clear demand."

"If this war takes place, then industrial action will take place to stop it."

"Today we should be saying: Blair, it's time to go!"

The leader of the RMT rail union Bob Crow reinforced those sentiments.

He said, "If there is war we should be preparing to occupy our industries."

"We should not be prepared to let the war take place. We've got to start waking up. The union movement, including my union, set up the Labour Party."

Stop

"How much longer can we go on giving money to a political party that is carrying on the same vicious policies as the Tories?"

"Unless this government starts listening, we must be prepared to take industrial action to protect industry and to protect civilisation."

Paul Mackney, head of the lecturers' Nafhe union, added, "The trade union movement should do everything in its power to prevent the war."

"The day war breaks out we should stop work at 11 o'clock and go to our local city centre."

"If we walk out over the war, we will be breaking Thatcher's vicious anti-union laws to uphold the golden principle of human solidarity."

"We say to Tony Blair: either stop this mad war or go."

TGWU deputy leader Tony Woodley said, "This war is about oil—it's about the pursuit of America's interests. Tony Blair told us he was prepared to pay the blood price for backing George Bush."

"We know that tens of thousands of women, men and children will be slaughtered for these lunatics."

"Many working people ask if they will also pay the jobs price for this reckless

and unjustifiable war."

■ Other union leaders speaking included Billy Hayes, general secretary of the postal workers' CWU, and Mark Serwotka, leader of the civil servants' PCS.



TARIQ ALI

'No war, whatever UN says'

THE AUDIENCE gave loud applause when Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy got up to speak.

But by the end of his speech this was reduced to polite clapping.

Kennedy spent his whole speech talking about upholding the UN. He did not condemn the war outright.

By contrast left wing Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn, who spoke next, got a much more rousing response.

Corbyn said, "There is no justice whatsoever in this war against Iraq. There is much talk about a possible second UN resolution."

"Even if the UN is bribed and cajoled, and it cobbles together some form of words which gives some form of pretext for war, I, like so many others, would still be against this war."

London mayor Ken Livingstone also said, "The nations on the UN Security Council are for sale. They can be bribed with offers of more trade deals and assets."

"We have to watch the Security Council like hawks."

Convenor of the Stop the War Coalition Lindsey German got a tremendous reception when she said, "Our message to Tony Blair is, if you go to war with George Bush, we will bring your government down."

"You will not survive as prime minister and you don't deserve to survive."

"And if Blair thinks that he can get his way with a second resolution, we say we don't want a war with or without a UN resolution."

Lindsey also talked of the way forward for the anti-war movement:

"We have to use everything in our power to stop the war."

"We want a mass movement of civil disobedience."

"We are asking you to strike on the day that war breaks out. We want you to occupy the colleges, walk out of schools, go to your town centre and protest."

And to cheers she said, "In London we're going to occupy the whole Whitehall area of government, so they won't be able to get their ministry cars through Westminster."



GEORGE GALLOWAY

Picture: RAY SMITH

Picture: MATT SAYWELL

Picture: RAY SMITH

THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

What kind of direct action do we need to stop the war machine?

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES will not stop this war.

That much is clear from the way Tony Blair has arrogantly dismissed the enormous groundswell of feeling against attacking Iraq.

It's a characteristic of the undemocratic system we have that governments can implement unpopular policies while keeping most MPs firmly under control, whatever their private misgivings.

Every radical change in Britain, including winning the vote, has come through extra-parliamentary action or the impending threat of it.

Hundreds of thousands of people are drawing that conclusion after last Saturday's march—which itself was a tremendous display of popular political action.

But what further action can halt the war machine?

There are broadly two types of what is often called "direct action" which mass movements have thrown up.

What has always made the difference is whether a movement has encouraged masses of people to take radical action or whether it has been left to relatively small numbers of activists.

The deployment of nuclear weapons and the threat of war produced a huge movement in the 1950s.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was founded in 1958.

By 1960 there were 500 local groups, 100 college branches and 160 youth groups.

The first annual Easter march in 1958 from the nuclear research plant at Aldermaston to London attracted some 4,000 marchers.

The numbers reached 10,000 when the march entered London.

Two years later the size of the march was four times bigger and 100,000 people joined it in London.

The Tory government of the day refused to listen to one big march. The movement was faced with the choice of what to do.

The leaders of CND put their focus on getting the Labour Party to support a position of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

They succeeded in winning the Labour conference to that in 1960.

But Hugh Gaitskell, the Labour leader, stated he would not be bound by the vote.

That drove philosopher Bertrand Russell and a core of other activists to form the Committee of 100 group.

They argued that if sufficient numbers of people took part in non-violent civil disobedience, got arrested

by **KEVIN OVENDEN**

and were thrown into prison it would force the end of nuclear weapons.

Thousands of people took part in sit-downs across the country.

Hundreds were arrested. The arrests were embarrassing for the government.

But it was able to cope and the movement went into rapid decline.

The government's hold over every area of society was left intact.

It was a different story when 250,000 people marched in 1990 against Margaret Thatcher's poll tax.

It wasn't just that there was one big march.

There had been protests and mass meetings in every town and city against the tax. Millions of people were refusing to pay it. This created a climate of defiance.

When the police attacked the march it was not simply a minority of people who sat down waiting to be arrested.

Swung

The mass of demonstrators fought back.

In the weeks that followed the sympathies of millions of people swung behind the protesters, despite universal press condemnation.

Hardline Thatcherite MP Alan Clark recalled in his diary the strikes and mass pickets that broke the Tory government in the early 1970s:

"Last night there were riots in central London. There is a strain in most Western countries, it is bad. Civil disorder. Could cut either way, but I fear will scare people into wanting a compromise—just as did Saltley Colliery and the three-day week in 1972-3.

"In the corridors and tea room people are now talking openly of ditching the Lady to save their skins."

In the face of mass revolt the Tories abandoned the poll tax, and with it Thatcher, six months later.

Mass revolt was at the heart of the movement that forced the US out of Vietnam.

The movement against the Vietnam War grew throughout the late 1960s.

It led to huge protest demonstrations in the US, though unlike today they took place some years into the war.

WORKERS' ACTION at Saltley Gates in 1972 terrified the government and won

The protests worried the US government, but were not enough by themselves to force it to abandon the war.

Out of frustration one group of radical students calling themselves the Weathermen took the idea of small groups of activists acting in isolation from the mass of people a stage further.

They despaired of winning over large numbers of workers or fellow students to take action.

They set about attacking the symbols of power violently by themselves.

By the late 1960s they were on the run from the authorities and, of necessity, totally cut off from wider layers of people who were questioning the war.

They were isolated from

the explosion of discontent that did shatter the US state's war effort.

In May 1970 the US National Guard opened fire on an anti-war demonstration at Kent State University in Ohio, killing four students.

Strike

The anger that swept the country reached new heights. Within days 350 universities were on strike.

The following weekend there were massive demonstrations. Four million students took part—60 percent of the total.

The establishment, already divided over the war, was gripped by fear.

A *New York Times* columnist summed up the concerns

of US president Nixon:

"Nixon's advisers thought when they came to power, they were dealing with a foreign war, and now they see they are dealing with a rebellion against the war, and maybe even a revolution at home."

The Blair government today faces a mass feeling against the war.

Its biggest nightmare is that the hundreds of thousands of people who took to the streets last Saturday turn towards radical action aimed at drawing in even bigger numbers.

The task now is to argue for the student occupations, protests at work, blockades of city centres and other collective acts that can make Blair's nightmare a reality.

NORTHERN IRAQ

No example of liberation

ONE OF the sickest and most dishonest arguments of supporters of Bush's war is that it is about liberating the people of Iraq, especially oppressed groups like the Shi'a Muslims and the Kurds.

Commentators say that the Kurdish area of northern Iraq, which has been free of Iraqi government control since 1991, shows the kind of democracy and human rights the US will bring to Iraq.

Northern Iraq is far from peaceful. The Turkish army has repeatedly invaded the area over the last decade. And it will be worse if there's a war.

It has bombed and shelled villages in an effort to destroy supporters of the PKK—a guerrilla group fighting for the rights of Turkey's Kurdish minority.

The US did a deal with Turkey two weeks ago to allow Turkish troops to occupy the Kurdish area of northern Iraq during war against Saddam Hussein.

Turkey's rulers do not want any move to set up an independent state in northern Iraq.

This would encourage similar demands among Kurds in Turkey.

Turkish capitalists have their own interests in Northern Iraq.

The UN gave permission for the Turkish Petroleum Company to drill two dozen wells near the city of Kirkuk two and a half years ago.

Turkish foreign minister Yasar Yakis repeated the Turkish state's longstanding claim for control of Kirkuk and the city of Mosul.

They are in one of the biggest oil-producing areas in Iraq.

Northern Iraq is currently controlled by two rival Kurdish factions—the KDP and the PUK.

They have pursued a bitter struggle that has resulted in repeated bouts of civil war.

This erupted in 1994 in the so called international safe haven in northern Iraq.

At stake was control of smuggling through the border with Turkey which provided the groups' two leaders, Jalal Talabani and Masoud Barzani, and their supporters with enormous revenues.

The US brokered a peace deal in 1998. But the territory remains di-

‘Northern Iraq is far from peaceful’

vided into PUK and KDP controlled areas.

Each group is vying for favour with Bush. Last October the CIA set up two field offices in northern Iraq—one in each of the two areas.

Each group's militias have arrested human rights activists, newspaper editors and other dissidents.

The mass of people live in appalling poverty, while a handful around the Talabani and Barzani clans have enriched themselves.

Turkey has enlisted the support of the KDP and PUK in its war against the Turkish Kurds.

Both groups oppress an ethnic minority called the Turkomans, and have tried to crush Islamic groups and other oppositionists.

Slice

One of the most absurd pro-war arguments is that the presence of the radical Islamist group Ansar al Islam in northern Iraq shows the Iraqi regime is linked to Osama Bin Laden.

Ansar al Islam is a tiny group that operates in the areas controlled by the KDP and the PUK.

Ansar came out of a group which was allied to the KDP in the 1990s.

Offering Turkey a slice of Iraq is not the first time Western powers have used the Kurds for their own ends.

The US and its client regime in Iran encouraged the Kurds of Iraq to launch military operations against the Iraqi government in the early 1970s.

Then Iran and Iraq came to an agreement over disputed territory and Iraq began moving closer to the US and away from Russia.

The Shah of Iran and the US government stood back while Iraqi forces butchered the Kurdish opposition.

Supporters of the war point to Saddam Hussein's use of poison gas against the Kurdish villagers of Halabja in 1988.

Yet Western governments supplied the gas and the Iraqi regime continued to enjoy US support as it was at war with Iran.

The Kurds have ended up being victims of every outside intervention in the Middle East over the last 80 years, whether directly at the hands of great powers or local regimes.

Another round of bloodletting by the US and Britain will bring them further suffering.

Who are the Kurds?

THE KURDS are the single biggest group of people in the world who lack their own state.

Britain and France carved up the whole of the Middle East at the end of the First World War.

They broke their promise to give the Kurds independence.

Today the Kurds are divided into territories in Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria.

They face national oppression in every one of these states.

Both the Kurdish factions in the north of Iraq have been happy to enlist the support of each of the oppressive regimes.

McVitie's sacks 900 workers

'In ten minutes they tore our lives apart'

A QUIET market town in Leicestershire was rocked last week by the announcement of 900 job cuts.

Ashby de la Zouch is known on the tourist trail for its medieval castle, used for a battle scene in the 19th century novelist Walter Scott's book *Ivanhoe*.

But one of the town's biggest employers, United Biscuits, put Ashby in the news for another reason after announcing its McVitie's factory will close.

The news has devastated the workers.

They organised their whole lives on the basis of having secure jobs.

They know that in Ashby, like so many other small towns around Britain, there are no other decent jobs available.

This is just one factory out of hundreds that are closing as British manufacturing hits its biggest slump since the recession of 1991.

Socialist Worker talked to some of the United Biscuits workers and local people in Ashby about what the closure would mean to them.

Dave was taking a short breather from his job as a burner, keeping the ovens running.

He told *Socialist Worker*, "They called this plant a flagship—it's more like the *Titanic*."

"They say they have to shut it because they can't expand the factory, but there's plenty of unused land and space at the back.

"It's the suits. As long as they get rich they don't care about anyone else.

"There's talk of relocating us, but we can't just move

by **BOB BAGNALL**
and **JUDY COX**

around the country.

"Me and my girlfriend have been working here 38 years between us."

Mark describes himself as a "grease monkey", responsible for maintaining the machines in the factory.

He said, "I am gutted. Everyone said there would always be a factory here. There has been a biscuit factory here since the 1930s.

"We thought we were secure. They always told us that this plant is profitable.

"I have been here for 18 years. Round here you can't get another job for anything like the same money.

"Since the pits shut, it's mostly agency jobs.

Moment

"There is a real community feeling round here. We live and work together—that will be finished."

Chris remembered the moment he was told about the closure: "I was stunned. It took two days to sink in. I still feel like it's not real.

"The company's excuses just don't ring true. They want to shut the place down for maximum profits."

Another worker said, "When the managing director broke the news to us, a lot of women starting crying.

"Within about ten minutes the lives of hundreds of people had been torn apart."

The workers are members of the Usdaw union.

Ed Leech is an Usdaw steward in the United Biscuits plant.

He told *Socialist Worker*, "We are incredibly disappointed with this decision.

"This is one of the more profitable parts of the company, and people here have shown they are flexible and committed.

"But we are facing up to 900 job losses.

"The nature of the work here isn't exactly pleasant, but the community atmosphere keeps people here.

"It will be very hard to find equivalent jobs in the area.

"Lots of people have been here since school.

"They never thought they would have to look for another job, do interviews and all that stuff."

■ United Biscuits told its workers not to talk to the press. Some of the names used have been changed.

ONE OF the 900 workers in Ashby who were told last week that they face the sack

Closure will mean that town crumbles

"IT'S A big company. They don't care about people at all—they only care about their bank balances."

That comment from a woman shopping in Ashby town centre last Saturday summed up the mood across the town.

United Biscuits is a huge multinational firm, the fourth

largest biscuit company in the world.

It makes McVitie's biscuits, Jaffa Cakes, Hula Hoops and KP snacks.

Its sales were worth £1.3 billion last year—an increase of 3.1 percent on 2001. Its business in Britain alone boasts sales worth around £300 million.

But it will wreck the lives of a whole community just to increase those profits even further.

Annette Waring and Mags Shuttleworth told *Socialist Worker*, "If they close the factory it will make people round here poorer still.

"And it's not just the biscuit factory—there are lots of other places shutting.

"It's not going to make life any better for anyone, is it?"

Also in the shopping centre was Chris, who works at the factory packing biscuits.

"It was devastating news. Everyone's livelihood round here is connected to that factory.

"I have worked there for

20 years. It is the only thing I have ever known.

"It's the young ones I feel sorry for. What are they going to have left?"

Pensioner Anne Pickering lives on a large council estate near Ashby.

She told *Socialist Worker*, "Shutting the factory is terrible.

"People travel to the factory from as far away as Derby. They will all be unemployed too.

"There will soon be nothing left in Ashby except a few offices, betting shops and pubs."

Mr Patel runs the newsagent on the council estate. He and one of his customers told *Socialist Worker*, "There used to be a pit down the road—Snibton. We call it Snibby.

"But now it is a discovery park for schoolkids to visit.

"I know a family where the two of them work at McVitie's. Now they will both be out of work.

"The plant was making money. It seems so illogical."

SIGNS THAT BOOM IS GOING BUST

MORE WORKERS in various different industries are facing the misery of losing their jobs.

Boots wants to sack around 1,000 workers, the MyTravel company has announced 700 job cuts, and the car components firm KTH Wales announced 240 job cuts.

Some 42,000 workers in manufacturing could get chucked out of work by April this year, according to a report last month by the bosses' CBI.

Bank of England deputy governor Mervyn King said last week that the prospect of war on Iraq had increased uncertainty in the British economy.

Even without this, the outlook for the economy has become gloomier over the last three months, he said.

The Bank of England's sudden interest rate cut, the first reduction in 15 months, was a sign of the increased worry that Britain could be heading for recession.

The *Financial Times* commented last week that there are "alarming parallels" between the recession in the early 1990s and the state of the economy today.

In the 1990s unemployment doubled from 1.5 million to three million.

Unemployment is around 1.5 million today.

At the worst point, in 1991, one in 130 people lost their homes.

Today economists are warning that Britain could be heading for its third recession in five years.

The number of companies going bankrupt jumped by 9 percent last year, its highest level in eight years.

Yet chancellor Gordon Brown still claims New Labour has beaten the cycle of "boom and bust".

New Labour boasts that the official unemployment figures are low. The government bullies and harasses anyone who is out of work.

Ministers assured workers that jobs in high tech industries would replace the old industries and factories.

But some workers are finding the job centres only offer part time work with short term contracts at the level of the minimum wage.

Families and whole communities are paying the price.

Ministers just shrug their shoulders. But the free market that New Labour worships means the misery of unemployment for many, and millions more living in fear of their future.



Picture: SOCIALIST WORKER

IN THE town centre

Picture: LEICESTER MERCURY

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IF YOUR AREA ISN'T SHOWN PHONE THE NUMBER ABOVE

Big ideas in informal settings

Marxist forums

BIRKENHEAD
Can Bush's empire-building be stopped?

Thu 20 Feb, 7.15pm, Oxton Green Community Centre, Christchurch Rd.

BIRMINGHAM HANDSWORTH
The Middle East, oil and imperialism

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Summerfield Community Centre, Dudley Rd.

BIRMINGHAM SPARKBROOK
Capital and conquest: the bloody history of the British Empire

Thu 20 Feb, 7pm, upstairs, Shahenshah, Ladypool Rd.

BIRMINGHAM STIRCHLEY
Does the media control public opinion?

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Stirchley Community Centre, Pershore Rd.

BLACKWOOD
Do we need a revolution to change society?

Mon 24 Feb, 7.15pm, Blackwood Miners Institute. *With Chris Nineham.*

BRADFORD CITY CENTRE
The grand strategy of the American Empire

Thu 20 Feb, 7pm, downstairs, Kashmir Restaurant, Morely St.

BRADFORD MANNINGHAM
Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?
Sun 23 Feb, 3pm, Cartwright Hotel, Manningham Lane.

BRIGHTON
Vietnam: when the US was humbled

Thu 27 Feb, 7.30pm, upstairs, Phoenix Community Centre, Phoenix Place. *With Pete Jackson.*

BRISTOL EASTON
Is war central to capitalism?

Sun 23 Feb, 3pm, Cafe Matreiya, St Mark's Rd.

BURNLEY
Can capitalism be replaced?

Wed 26 Feb, 7.30pm, Shalamar, Church St.

CAMBRIDGE
Vietnam: when the US was humbled
Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, CB2, Norfolk St. *With Gareth Jenkins.*

CHELTENHAM

Advertising the body: why sexism sells
Wed 5 Mar, 7.30pm, HC207, FCH Campus, University of Gloucester, St Paul's Rd.

CHESTERFIELD

Vietnam: when the US was humbled
Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Assembly Rooms, Market Sq. *With Bari Phillips.*

COLCHESTER
Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?
Mon 24 Feb, 8pm, RAD Hall, Southway. *With Vicky Williamson.*

CRAWLEY
Can war lead to revolution?

Wed 26 Feb, 7.30pm, Three Bridges Community Centre, Gales Place. *With Dave Jones.*

CREWE
Does the media control our ideas?

Thu 6 March, 7.30pm, Kings Arms Hotel, Earle St.

DARLINGTON
Vietnam: when US imperialism was humbled
Thu 27 Feb, 8pm, Longfield Street Sports Centre.

DONCASTER
What a carve-up: the history of the Middle East

Wed 26 Feb, 7pm, The Point, South Parade. *With Pete Jackson.*

DUDLEY
Advertising the body: why sexism sells
Wed 5 Mar, 7.30pm, Claughton Community Centre, Blowers Green.

EXETER
Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?
Wed 26 Feb, 6pm, Dinosaur Cafe (nr clock tower).

HARLOW
How do we fight fascism?
Wed 26 Feb, 8pm, Polly's Pantry, Wych Elm. *With James Meadway.*

HUDDERSFIELD
Can people power change the world?
Thu 20 Feb, 6pm, Coffeevolution, Wood St.



Picture: MATT SAYWELL

LEEDS BEESTON
What is the grand strategy of the US Empire?

Thu 27 Feb, 7pm, Tunstall Road Community Centre.

LEEDS CHAPELTOWN
The grand strategy of the American Empire

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, West Indian Centre, Laycock Place.

LEEDS HEADINGLEY
Anti-capitalism: does the movement need political parties?

Thu 6 Mar, 6.30pm, Delicatessen Coffee Bar, Hyde Park. *With Chris Bambery.*

LEICESTER
What is the grand strategy of the American Empire?
Mon 3 Mar, 7.30pm, Mozart Cafe, London Rd.

LINCOLN
Can people power topple a government?

Tue 4 March, 6pm, Nourish, 1 Newlands.

LIVERPOOL TOXTETH
Can Bush's empire-building be stopped?

Thu 20 Feb, 7.15pm, Yemeni Community Centre, Lodge Lane.

LOWESTOFT
The grand strategy of the American Empire
Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Havelock, Love Rd. *With Nick Bird.*

LUTON
Can people power topple a government?
Mon 3 Mar, 7.30pm, Finnigan's Cafe, Manor Rd.

MANCHESTER CHORLTON
Vietnam: when a mass movement stopped a war
Mon 24 Feb, 7.30pm, Chorlton Library. *With Ron Senchak.*

MANCHESTER LONGSIGHT
Why does capitalism breed war?

Thu 27 Feb, 7.30pm, New Himalayan Restaurant, Stockport Rd. *With Michael Bradley.*

MANCHESTER PRESTWICH
Is revolution possible?

Wed 26 Feb, 7.30pm, Caribbean Retreat, Clifton Rd (off Bury New Rd).

MANCHESTER RUSHOLME
Why does capitalism breed war?

Thu 20 Feb, 6.30pm, Jaffa Restaurant, Wilmslow Rd.

MANSFIELD & ASHFIELD
Does the media control public opinion?

Tue 25 Feb, 7.30pm, Old Library, Leeming Rd.

MILTON KEYNES
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East

Sat 22 Feb, 2pm, Meeting Room, 402 North Row.

NEATH
Can war lead to revolution?
Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Mocha Jo's. *With Matthew Shephard.*

NORTHAMPTON
The politics of fast food: why the Big Mac holds us back

Thu 6 Mar, 7pm, Cafe Msaada, Kettering Rd.

NOTTINGHAM HYSOON GREEN
Is racism getting worse?

Wed 5 Mar, 7pm, Forest Fields Community Centre, Burton St.

NOTTINGHAM SHERWOOD
Does the media control public opinion?

Tue 25 Feb, 7.30pm, Katmandu, Mansfield Rd.

OLDHAM
Are women equal today?
Sat 22 Feb, 2pm, Bar 360, Oldham Gallery.

OXFORD CITY CENTRE
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East

Wed 26 Feb, 7.30pm, Mitre, High St. *With Jonathan Neale.*

OXFORD COWLEY
Is genetics out of control?

Wed 5 Mar, 7.30pm, Asian Cultural Centre. *With John Parrington.*

PONTEFRACT
The grand strategy of the American Empire

Sun 23 Feb, 5pm, Squash Club, Stewart Rd.

PORTSMOUTH
The grand strategy of the American Empire

Sun 23 Feb, 7pm, Citrus Cafe, Albert Rd.

PRESTON
How capitalism underdevelops Africa

Tue 25 Feb, 7.30pm, Unity Community Centre, Shepherd St.

RAMSGATE
Can people power topple a government?

Mon 3 Mar, 7.30pm, Family Room, Racing Greyhound.

READING
Does the media control public opinion?

Mon 24 Feb, 7.30pm, Reading International Solidarity Centre, London St. *With Chris Bambery.*

ROCHESTER
The grand strategy of the American Empire

Thu 27 Feb, 8pm, Eon Internet Cafe, High St.

With Mark Thomas.

ROTHERHAM
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Unity Centre, St Leonard's Rd.

ST ALBANS
The politics of fast food: why the Big Mac holds us back

Mon 3 Mar, 7.30pm, upstairs, Trinity Church (cnr Victoria St/Beaconsfield Rd).

With Keith Randle.
SCUNTHORPE
Divide and rule: why asylum seekers are not to blame

Mon 3 March, 7.30pm, Central Community Centre, Lindum St.

SHEFFIELD CITY CENTRE
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East

Thu 20 Feb, 6pm, Coffee Revolution, Church St.

SHEFFIELD HILLSBOROUGH
Vietnam: when the US was humbled

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Sports Arena, Middlewood Rd.

With Maxine Bowler.
SHEFFIELD NETHER EDGE

Can war lead to revolution?

Sat 22 Feb, 3pm, TC's Internet Cafe, Abbeydale Rd.

With Maxine Bowler.
SHEFFIELD PARK HILL

Can war lead to revolution?

Thu 27 Feb, 6pm, Bard Street Community Centre. *With Dick Pitt.*

SHEFFIELD SHARROW
Islam, resistance and revolution

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Highfields Library, London Rd.

SOUTHAMPTON
The bloody history of the British Empire

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Cook House, St Mary's St.

SUTTON COLDFIELD
Vietnam: when a superpower was humbled

Sat 22 Feb, 3pm, Three Tuns, Lichfield Rd. *With Christine Lewis.*

SWINDON
After 15 February: where next for the anti-capitalist movement?

Thu 6 March, 7.30pm, Arts Centre, Devizes Rd.

With Alex Callinicos.
WAKEFIELD

Vietnam: when the US was humbled
Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Black Rock, Bullring.

WALSALL
Why does capitalism breed war?

Wed 26 Feb, 7.30pm, Palfrey Community Centre, Malton St.

With Andy North.
WATFORD

Does the media control our ideas?

Thu 6 Mar, 7.30pm, Costa Coffee, High St.

With Brian Butterworth.
WHITSTABLE

Does the media control our ideas?

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Marx and Sparks, Unit 12, Warwick Rd. *With Judith Orr.*

WIGAN
The bloody history of British imperialism

Thu 27 Feb, 7.30pm, MAB Cafe, Standishgate.

WOLVERHAMPTON
The grand strategy of the American Empire

Thu 27 Feb, 7.30pm, Blakenhall Community Centre, Dudley Rd.

With Mike Haynes.
YORK

Can people power topple a government?

Wed 5 Mar, 8pm, Priory Street Centre.

FORUMS IN LONDON

ACTON
Venezuela: is Chavez facing a Chile-style coup?

Tue 25 Feb, 7.30pm, West London Trade Union Club,

Acton High St.

BARKING
Is violence ever justified?

Thu 27 Feb, 7.30pm, Barking Library. *With Judith Orr.*

BAYSWATER
Islam, resistance and revolution

Wed 5 Mar, 7.30pm, Coffee Island, Westbourne Grove.

BRICK LANE
Martin Luther King and the politics of civil disobedience

Wed 5 Mar, 7.30pm, Coffee@Brick Lane.

CAMDEN
Empire: the bloody history of British rule

Wed 26 Feb, 6.30pm, Marlina Snack Bar, 87 Camden High St.

With Chris Harman.
CLAPHAM & STOCKWELL

Karl Marx: the first anti-capitalist?

Wed 26 Feb, 7.30pm, Venn Street Community Centre.

CROYDON
The grand strategy of the American Empire

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Spice Cafe, Surrey St. *With Chris Harman.*

DULWICH
Is violence ever justified?

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, upstairs, Dulwich Leisure Centre, East Dulwich Rd. *With Julie Waterson.*

EAST HAM
Does the media control our ideas?

Thu 20 Feb, 6.30pm, Indo Ceylon Cafe, St John's Rd (off High St North).

EAST TWICKENHAM
Imperialism and the Middle East

Thu 20 Feb, 8pm, ETNA Community Centre, Rosslyn Rd.

ELEPHANT & WALWORTH
After 15 February: how do we stop the war?

Mon 24 Feb, 7.30pm, Pullens Centre, 184 Crampton St.

ELTHAM
Why is Blair supporting Bush? The history of British imperialism

Tue 25 Feb, 7.30pm, St Mary's Community Centre, Eltham High St. *With Sam Ashman.*

EUSTON
Advertising the body: why sexism sells

Wed 26 Feb, 6.30pm, Cafe Deco, Store St (off Gower St).

With Maxine Bowler.
FINSBURY PARK

Divide and rule: why we say don't blame asylum seekers

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Gadz Cafe, 45 Clifton Terrace (opp  ).

GREEN LANES
How capitalism underdevelops Africa

Wed 5 Mar, 7.30pm, St John's Vianni Hall, West Green Rd (cnr Vincent Rd).

HAMMERSMITH
Vietnam: how the US was humbled

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Palancewick House, King St.

HOUNSLOW
Vietnam: how the US was humbled

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Montague Hall, Montague Rd.

With Martin Smith
HOXTON

War and revolution in the 21st century

Thu 20 Feb, 7pm, Barley Mow (cnr Curtain Rd/Rivington St).

With Ian Birchall.
ILFORD

The Black Panthers
Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Kohi-Noor, Ilford Lane.

With Hassan Mahamdallie.
LADBROKE GROVE

Joe Strummer and The Clash: rocking the system

Tue 4 Mar, 7.30pm, Green Room, Paddington Arts Centre, Woodfield Rd. *With Martin Smith.*

LEWISHAM
The bloody history of British imperialism

Wed 26 Feb, 7pm, Hunkarim Restaurant, Lee High Rd.

With Chris Bambery.

LONDON FIELDS
Gandhi and the end of empire

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Queensbridge Sport and Community Centre, Holly St.

MILE END
Can mass movements change the world?

Mon 24 Feb, 7.30pm, Orange Room Cafe, Burdett Rd.

With Judith Orr.
MUSWELL HILL

Vietnam: when the US was humbled

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Sasa Thai Restaurant.

With Jonathan Neale.
NEW CROSS

Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East

Tue 25 Feb, 6.30pm, Moonbow Jake's Coffee Bar, New Cross Rd.

With Charlie Kimber.
POPLAR & ISLE OF DOGS

Can mass movements change the world?

Wed 26 Feb, 7pm, Island House (cnr Roserton St/ Castillia Sq). *With Pete Morgan.*

SEVEN SISTERS
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East

Wed 26 Feb, 7.30pm, Dugyu, 105 West Green Rd.

With Sam Ashman.
STAMFORD HILL

Capitalism kills: can we kill capitalism?

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Cyprus House Cafe, Manor Parade (cnr Manor Rd).

STREATHAM
Advertising the body: why sexism sells

Wed 5 Mar, 7.30pm, Derinton Road Community Centre.

TUFNELL PARK
Blood and oil: the real history of the Middle East

Wed 26 Feb, 7.30pm, Whittington Community Centre, Yerbury Rd.

With Michael Bradley.
WALTHAMSTOW

Vietnam: when a superpower was humbled

Thu 20 Feb, 7.30pm, Quaker Meeting House, Jewel Rd.

With Nigel Davey.
WOOLWICH

Palestine: can it ever be free?

Wed 26 Feb, 7.30pm, upstairs, Earl of Chatham, Thomas St. *With John Rose.*

UNIVERSITY FORUMS
GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE

Palestine: what's the solution?

Tue 25 Feb, 2pm, Committee Room, Student Union.

With John Rose.
GREENWICH UNIVERSITY

Fascism: what is it and how do we fight it?

Thu 20 Feb, 5pm, Stephen Lawrence Building, Maritime Site.

With Andrew Stone.
MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Revolution: is it possible?

Thu 20 Feb, 6.30pm, Cameron Committee Room, third floor, Student Union.

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY
Can war lead to revolution?

Thu 20 Feb, 5.30pm, MR6, Student Union, Oxford Rd.

With Toby Gibbons.
NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

Does our movement need to challenge the state?

Bush's friends lick their wounds

Venezuela—a new defeat for the rich

ONE OF Latin America's richest men, Gustavo Cisnero, was on holiday at his luxury villa in the Dominican Republic just over a week ago.

His old friend, former US president George Bush Sr, was with him. But Cisnero could not have been happy.

He, and the rest of Venezuela's rich, had just seen their most recent attempt to overthrow the elected government of his native Venezuela finally collapse.

The Cisnero family's "Group of Companies" boast that they are "one of the largest privately held media, technology and telecommunications organisations in the world", operating in 39 different countries.

They have close links with the giant US multinational AOL Time Warner, as well as controlling the largest bottler of Coca-Cola outside the US and Venezuela's biggest television channel.

Cisnero is at the core of the ruling class—known locally as the "oligarchy"—of one of the most unequal societies in Latin America.

In his efforts to overthrow President Hugo Chavez he had the support of the bulk of the media, the banks, the top managers who run the nationalised oil company, and a number of senior generals.

He could also rely on most of Venezuela's traditional political establishment, the entrenched bureaucrats who dominate the country's main union federation, and the US government adviser for the region, Otto Reich.

So confident were people like Cisnero of success when they launched a first coup attempt last April that they put the head of the employers' federation in as president—in place of the country's elected president, Chavez.

But the Venezuelan coup makers made one major miscalculation. They forgot about the accumulated bitterness of the country's poor.

These swarmed into the centre of the capital, Caracas, from the shanty towns that surrounded it to show militant opposition to the coup, causing a split in the armed forces that then restored Chavez to office.

In the aftermath of the

by CHRIS HARMAN

failed coup Hugo Chavez preached "conciliation" with his opponents.

He even reinstated to their positions those heads of the state oil company who had been keen to get rid of him. Meanwhile judges linked to the oligarchy freed army officers who had tried to overthrow Chavez.

A second onslaught by Venezuela's rich on Chavez began in October.

Retired generals opposed to Chavez called for his overthrow.

The media organisations broadcast virtually non-stop appeals for people to demonstrate in their support.

The head of the employers' organisation and the head of the trade union federation issued a joint appeal for a "national civic stoppage".

Split

This time the poor did not wait for the plotters to overthrow Chavez, but took to the streets immediately.

The whole country was split down the middle between demonstrations organised by the rich and the media against Chavez, and demonstrations from poor neighbourhoods in his support.

The forces of the state were also split.

A layer of officers close to Chavez ensured that the army continued to back him.

The supreme court made repeated anti-Chavez judgements, and the powerful and armed Caracas police openly backed the opposition.

The oligarchy launched a "national stoppage" in December to try and topple Chavez. Newspapers across the world talked of "a general strike".

It was not a strike. Employers closed down workplaces and told workers they would continue to be paid if they went home.

Neither was it general. Most groups of workers refused to join it.

Those who had come on to the streets to defend the government now mobilised in their workplaces to keep production going.

The only real stoppages were in the oilfields and among seagoing tankers.

This was because of action by managers, technicians and ships' captains. Of 300,000 oil workers, only 30,000 took

part in the stoppage.

This was enough to cut oil output down to a trickle, but not enough to bring down the government.

Eventually even the US, worried about oil shortages as it prepares for war against Iraq, was keen for the shut-down to end. It demoted the US adviser who had encouraged the coup attempts, Otto Reich.

Venezuela's rich now find that they have gambled heavily—and lost.

That is why, as he met with George Bush Sr last week, Cisnero will have been counting his losses and wondering what he should do next.

He and the rest of Venezuela's rich will, no doubt, hope to bide their time and return to the attack when the US is no longer preoccupied with Iraq.

Whether they are able to do so depends on how Venezuela's workers and poor take advantage of the defeat of the coup attempt.

Chavez's inclination is to rely on the support he has among army officers for a top-down purge of some of his opponents.

But the whole experience of Latin America is that this can only keep the right wing at bay for a period.

During the last two months the workers and poor have played a key role in beating back the right by organising themselves from below and pushing for demands far more radical than those of Chavez himself.

They need to continue to do so.



Picture: PA PHOTOS/EPA

CHAVEZ (LEFT) has mass support among the poor

Workers hold the key

THE BRITISH media say that in the wake of the collapsed coup attempt Chavez has sacked thousands of oil workers.

Those dismissed are managers involved in the attempt to topple him.

The media here have not reported that in a few areas Venezuelan workers began to challenge the bosses' control.

A group of rank and file oil workers write, "Workers' mobilisations were very important for taking control away from the supporters of a coup. But usually they were restricted to returning control to the government."

There were cases, though, where workers such as those in El Palito and Puerto La Cruz "took control of the oil refineries and

ran them themselves".

Since the collapse of the coup attempt "the government has now started to restructure the petroleum industry".

But the oil workers warn, "There is an absence in this restructuring of democratic participation of the very workers who the president praised for their role in reactivating the industry."

The oil workers point out that "workers' control and the restructuring from below of the industry which is responsible for 80 percent of national output would virtually amount to the taking of power by the workers".

Whether moves in that direction happen will be crucial in determining whether the needs of workers and the poor will be met.

Who is Chavez?

VENEZUELA IS the world's fifth biggest oil exporter, and supplies about 14 percent of the US's oil.

A tiny layer have fabulous wealth, while some 85 percent of Venezuela's people live in poverty.

Hugo Chavez emerged as an army colonel who in 1992 attempted to lead a coup against the corrupt regime.

After a spell in prison Chavez was elected president in a landslide victory in 1998. His key support was among the poor. But at that time many of the oligarchy also backed him. They hoped he would at least end instability.

In 2000 Chavez was re-elected president, and won backing for a new constitution giving him power to push through real reform.

Chavez genuinely wants

to help Venezuela's poor, and that has enraged the country's rich. That, his opposition to neo-liberal policies and his nationalist stance has also horrified the US regime.

Chavez does not believe in ordinary people reshaping society from below.

He looks to top-down methods, relying on a layer of radical army officers and supporters in key positions.

The *Financial Times* this week worried that Chavez could be moving to impose Cuban-style top-down state control.

Whether Chavez will embark on such a path remains to be seen. In the past he has also been keen to compromise with his rich opponents too.

But the key to the future for Venezuela's workers and poor lies in their own hands.

In brief

Can you spare a nickel?

AROUND 400 workers at a factory in Hereford were set to strike for five days this week.

The workers, members of the GMB union, work at Special Metals Wiggins producing nickel alloys.

The company's derisory offer of a 1 percent pay rise has been overwhelmingly rejected by the workforce, who are demanding a rise of 3 percent.

Senior GMB shop steward Phil Cogzell said, "Our members are not very happy with the situation, as shown by an 84 percent rejection of the offer. Our demands are in line with inflation. All we want to do is keep our heads above water."

Workers say no to budget

COUNCIL WORKERS in Southampton were set to strike for the day on Wednesday of this week.

Last week around 500 council workers gathered for a mass outdoor meeting and voted to reject Southampton City Council's budget by 467 to six.

The budget included cuts in jobs and workers' allowances. Union branch secretary Mike Tucker said, "The vote demonstrated how strongly council workers reject the council's proposals. The council is now facing the most serious industrial relations case in its history."

The strike will involve around 2,200 workers.

Make a stand for democracy

OVER 270,000 PCS civil servants' union members are continuing their ballot for more democracy in their union.

Activists have leafleted a number of key workplaces to argue for annual national executive elections and annual conferences.

The vote is a great opportunity to win more control of the union for ordinary members.

Many members are angry with the right wing dominated national executive's attempts to sack elected general secretary Mark Serwotka, and its refusal to accept democratic decisions.

The ballot ends on Friday 27 February. Activists should ensure that every member in their office has voted for more democracy, and that every PCS workplace in their area has been leafleted.

■ **Contact Left Unity to get your leaflets. E-mail PCSLeftUnity@tesco.net or go to www.mogtv.com/civilunrest**

We'll make a din against racism

THE CAMPAIGN to defend the Hackney "Anti-Racist Three" is continuing, with a protest planned for next week.

Brian Debus and Will Leng are Unison's joint branch secretaries, and John Page is the union's joint equality officer in Hackney, east London.

They have been suspended by the Labour-run council for allegedly circulating a draft report on racism in the council. The union branch has been inundated with messages of support.

On Monday 24 February there will be a "Make a din against racism" lobby of the council meeting at the town hall in Mare Street at 6pm.

A benefit at the Ocean in Hackney is also organised for 21 March.

■ **For more information e-mail hackney.unison@unisonfree.net or fax 020 8985 6749.**

Peugeot car workers

Strikers take on the dictators of the track

AROUND 3,500 workers at the massive Ryton Peugeot plant near Coventry walked out on strike for 24 hours last week.

They brought the plant to a standstill.

The first shift to strike began picketing at 5.30am on Thursday of last week, the day after the car giant announced yearly profits of £1.2 billion.

Peugeot bosses are determined to deny the workforce a decent pay rise.

They offered 7.3 percent over two years, some of which would be clawed back in increased pension contributions.

One of the TGWU union convenors at the plant explained how angry workers feel.

"We work anti-social shifts

in there. The bottom line is that shifts here are worse than elsewhere in the industry," he said.

"They are making a lot of money and we want our share of it."

The car plant is very modern and high-tech, but working conditions are more 19th century than 21st.

One worker, Kevin, told Socialist Worker, "I work on the tracks. We call it the iron horse."

"I have been here for 15 years and it has been getting worse every year. Profits come before everything. It's just us and them."

"We work 37.5 hours a week, getting up in the middle of the night."

"It means getting up at 4.15

in the morning on some shifts or getting home at 12.30 at night on others, so you have no social life."

"During those shifts you get three ten-minute breaks with just 25 minutes off for dinner."

"There's no partnership in there. They say it's a democracy, but it's a dictatorship."

Another picket, also called Kevin, described the atmosphere in the plant: "Management keep pushing and pushing, taking and taking."

"People don't realise what we have given this company over the last few years."

"They say we should be grateful for just having a job."

"We have people coming in who don't last a day or even an hour before they pack it in."

"This strike isn't just for now. It's for the future, for the young people working in there."

Bas has worked at the Peugeot plant since 1968. He told *Socialist Worker*, "It is oppressive in there, dictatorial."

"Management don't live in the real world."

"In 1968 there was a playing field where we are standing and you could bring your family here for a day out. It's not like that now."

Frank added, "We have done everything they want and now we want a bit back."

"We have been the most obliging workers in the industry. We have cooperated all the way, but they still want to put the boot into us."

"Working those shifts plays havoc with your family life."

"Our basic pay is only £14,000 a year."

"They try to play on people's fears about closures, but this plant is a goldmine."

Rail workers

OVER 5,000 train guards working for 21 companies are to vote on strikes over safety.

The RMT rail union is calling the action after train companies reneged on a deal last year to preserve the safety role of guards.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow says, "For most operators safety has come a poor second to profit."

"This shameful cash-first attack on safety standards is a threat to everyone who works

"I would rather be going all out than just a one-day strike."

Bas added, "In there you stoop all day, shoving seats into cars and stuff like that. There are a lot of industrial injuries."

"If you get a headache you have to use your own money to buy pills out of a machine."

"If you are five minutes late in the morning they ring you at home and even come round knocking on your door to pressure you to come into work."

"Sometimes they get people to follow someone off sick, to check they aren't skiving."

"I have seen people working on the track with their arms in plaster because they are so afraid of losing their jobs."

"I had pneumonia once and they gave me two 'FU' pills. I ended up in hospital with blood clots. They didn't even take my temperature."

"One bloke's daughter was being bullied at school. He asked to be put on earlies so he could pick her up from school."

"The company just said, 'It's not our problem, it's yours. If you can't come to work you will be disciplined. That's that.' So much for family-friendly policies."

"The people who are pushing us lead nice, normal lives. They come to work in daylight and get to see their kids."

"We were in a meeting with a manager and he suddenly said, 'I have to leave now to go and look after the kids.' Imagine if I said something like that."

JUDY COX
■ **The workers have called a second one-day strike. It will affect all shifts and last over a long weekend from Friday 7 March to Monday 10 March.**

London weighting pay campaign

ACTIVISTS IN the unions covering university workers are campaigning hard against accepting a terrible offer on London allowance payments.

The insulting offer only came after two one-day strikes.

It amounts to just £130 a year extra in inner London, £90 in outer London, and just £30 in the surrounding areas.

Negotiators in the Natfhe and AUT lecturers' unions were set to recommend accepting the deal.

But there is a strong feeling in London's universities that serious action in conjunction with other public sector workers in the city can win substantial gains.

The National Union of Teachers decided last week to authorise a ballot for another one-day strike in London over allowance payments.

Teachers face an utterly divisive offer which gives next to nothing to those who have been in the job for less

than five years.

The offer also links any extra payments to the hated performance-related pay scheme.

Activists across the public sector unions in London are arguing for further action over each specific campaign and for coordinating strikes.

Meetings of council workers, teachers and lecturers have all responded enthusiastically to the idea of striking together on 1 May.

□ **ELECTIONS FOR the national executive committee of Natfhe are under way.**

The activist grouping Natfhe Rank and File is supporting the following candidates: Paul Russell for vice-president, Peter Jones for treasurer, Roger Smith for adult education, Maire Daly for women's seat, Tina Downes for regional FE seat, Peter Murray for outer London regional FE seat, and Richard Kirwood for outer London HE seat.

Health workers

AMICUS-MSF health workers in London voted overwhelmingly last week to oppose the government's new pay package, Agenda for Change.

The meeting of the Health Service Advisory Committee (the body representing health workers in London) was the largest and angriest for years.

Members spoke about pay cuts, a reduction in on-call allowances, longer working hours, and London weighting that is a percentage of pay (if you're on a low wage, you get less London weighting).

Many workers will face pay cuts from the new job evaluation scheme.

And the Agenda for Change proposals will also increase working hours for 60 percent of our members, and introduce several different forms of performance-related pay.

Employers will have the freedom to freeze the pay of any health worker at any time if they think the person is showing "significant weaknesses".

All health workers will effectively have to repeat a probationary year each time they change jobs in the NHS—again, employers will be given the right to withhold pay increases.

Agenda for Change is seri-

ously underfunded. The proposed agreement demands that unions, in the spirit of partnership, work with employers to implement Agenda for Change "within financial constraints".

If union leaders sign up for this they are agreeing in advance to the continuation of low pay and inadequate funding in the NHS.

The views of London members reflect a growing unease around Britain. In the most Blairite of unions, the tide is beginning to turn against Agenda for Change.

SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

Called by the FBU to defend our services and to debate the political fund
Saturday 1 March, 11am, Camden Centre, London
Phone 020 7359 3686

Journalists

JOURNALISTS AT two Newsquest-owned newspaper groups in the north of England were set to walk out on Monday of this week.

Management refused to offer an increased pay deal.

In Bradford workers are to strike for five days.

They have been offered just 2 percent.

In Kendal, where bosses have offered 2.5 percent, the walkout was planned for four days.

The NUJ journalists' union Bradford chapel (workplace branch) has agreed to name ten more days of strike action.

NUJ MEMBER
■ **Please send messages of support and donations, with cheques payable to "NUJ Manchester" to NUJ, 22 Swan Street, Manchester M4 5JQ, or e-mail bradfordnuj@yahoo.co.uk**

A student teach-in to build the resistance to capitalism & war

28 February-2 March

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Asad Rehman ESF

Coordinating Group, Linda Smith London Region FBU, Mark Seddon editor *Tribune*, Helen Salmon NUS NEC member

For information and bookings: Phone 020 7515 2646 E-mail swss@swp.org.uk or go to www.swp.org.uk/swss



Hosted by the Socialist Worker Student Society at the London School of Economics

TGWU and GMB union elections

Nightmares for Blair?

THERE ARE many things that stop Tony Blair sleeping at night. One of them is his fear that the union movement may be about to humiliate him again.

Two of Britain's biggest and most influential unions, the TGWU and GMB, are about to elect new general secretaries.

In both elections the candidates have not been finally decided.

But all the main contenders are playing up their opposition to Downing Street.

They know that being openly supported by Tony Blair would be the kiss of death to their election hopes.

New Labour has already been shaken by the rise of the "awkward squad", a new generation of left wing union leaders.

Bill Morris has led the TGWU, Britain's third biggest union, since 1991.

Nominations for candidates will be taken from 24 March to 23 April, with the election taking place in May.

Jack Dromey is the contender most closely associated with Downing Street, despite recent efforts to sound militant.

He is married to the Solicitor General, Harriet Harman. Dromey also stood as a Blairite candidate against Bill Morris in 1995.

Downing Street has quietly let it be known that it favours Dromey, creating an "anyone but Dromey" backlash among some members.

Another likely candidate

is the union's deputy general secretary, Tony Woodley.

Woodley is to the left of Dromey and talks of the TGWU "becoming once again a union fighting back for its members".

But some activists are suspicious of his record of throwing away opportunities for mass action against redundancies in car plants like Rover Longbridge and Ford Dagenham.

Another possible candidate is Barry Camfield, an assistant general secretary based in London.

Camfield is favoured by many militants in the union.

He has spoken out against attacking Iraq, has opposed privatisation and addressed the May Day demonstration in London last year.

The second major union election will find a replacement for John Edmonds, who is retiring as general secretary of the GMB.

There are two main contenders so far.

Kevin Curran, from the northern region, is believed to have the backing of many Labour MPs from the north east.

Paul Kenny has criticised the government's treatment of the firefighters' dispute.

He recently told the BBC, "It is becoming increasingly difficult to explain to members why New Labour continues to bite the hand that feeds it."

The serious left in the union will be backing Paul Kenny.

in to build resistance to war and capitalism hosted by Socialist Worker Student Society and Spark. Phone 020 7515 2646 for details.

Saturday 1 March

● Conference to defend public services and debate the political fund, 11am-4pm, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, London. Called by London Region FBU. All FBU members and trade unionists welcome.

Monday 3 March

● Where is Labour going? Meeting, 7.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London. Speakers include Bob Crow, George Galloway MP, Mark Serwotka and John Rees.

Saturday 15 March

● Socialist Alliance annual

general meeting, London. For more details go to www.socialistalliance.net

Sunday 30 March

● Say no to locking up asylum seekers, protest 1.30pm, Dugavel removals centre, South Lanarkshire. Called by Ayrshire Friends of Refugees.

Saturday 26 April

● Stop privatisation—the case for council housing. Defend Council Housing national conference, 11am-4.30pm, Friends Meeting House, Liverpool.

Friday 4 July-Friday 11 July

● Marxism 2003, central London. A week of debates, forums and meetings organised by the Socialist Workers Party.



Thursday 27 February

● Protest against Blair's visit to Canterbury, 1pm, Buttermarket, outside the Cathedral.

Friday 28 February

● Stop the war protest at Welsh Labour Party conference, 12 noon, Guildhall, Swansea, the same day as the second Blix report. Called by Swansea Coalition Against War.

28 February-2 March

● Revolution 2003, a teach-

CANDY UDWIN AND DAVE CARR

Their only 'crime' was to defend NHS

by YUNUS BAKHSH and MARK NEW (both Unison NEC), and CLAIRE WILLIAMS (convenor Northern Region Unison)

TWO LEADING campaigners for the health service, Candy Udwin and Dave Carr, have been unjustly expelled from the Unison union.

It is one of the most shameful episodes in the history of Unison.

It is the final act of a political witch-hunt that was waged by a section of the Unison bureaucracy. This witch-hunt began with the election of New Labour in 1997.

It became apparent that New Labour's agenda was privatisation, and that Blair saw himself as Thatcher Mark Two.

A section of the union leadership decided to remove those activists who they felt could lead a real opposition to New Labour's Tory agenda.

The price of loyalty to New Labour was to be the heads of socialists. These were the very people who had given years of hard work and dedication to keeping union organisation intact during the dark years of the Tories.

Dave and Candy's only crime was to lead a strike against the Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

They told the truth—that the strike was to defend the NHS and to stop PFI.

Yet, instead of being supported, the UCLH branch was attacked by the Unison leadership.

The management of UCLH used the Tory anti trade union laws against the action.

The union leadership responded by blaming Dave and Candy and demanding their removal.

Every activist in the union knows this was a political attack.

The process of the disciplinary was a farce. It culminated in Dave and Candy being denied the right to put their case at their own disciplinary.

Despite this, Candy was elected deputy convenor of London.

People who know Dave and Candy speak of their dedication and commitment, not just to Unison members but to all workers and trade unionists.

Whenever solidarity is needed they are the first there and the last to leave.

When Dave Prentis was elected general secretary of Unison he promised a new era, an end to political attacks and an end to the witch-hunt.

Yet for all Prentis's fine words Dave and Candy have still been expelled.

Blair is preparing to take us into a military war.

He is already waging a



CANDY HANDS over £1,000 to firefighters' union leader Andy Gilchrist in solidarity with their strike

war against public sector workers.

In such a battle no union can afford to remove some of its key fighters.

Even at this stage it is still possible for Prentis and

Unison's national executive committee to step back from this act of madness.

Our fight is to defend our services and to stop Blair's Tory agenda.

We need unity, we need

to stand together, and we need Dave and Candy in our union.

■ The expulsion must be raised at every level and in every possible forum in Unison and throughout the

trade union movement. ■ For model resolutions and a statement against the expulsions phone 07946 480 261. ■ Send messages of support to 54A Darnley Road, Hackney, London E9 6QH.

They are a real inspiration

CANDY UDWIN has spent over 25 years fighting for the NHS.

In the late 1970s she was secretary of a campaign to save the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson women's hospital in central London.

She has worked as a clinic receptionist at UCLH hospitals since 1980 and for over 20 years has led strikes and campaigns to stop ward closures, cuts and privatisation.

Dave Carr works as a specialised nurse at UCLH, nursing people recovering from burns and plastic surgery.

Along with Candy he has been at the forefront of the campaigns to defend the NHS and stop privatisation.

Jim Fagan, the joint branch secretary of Tower Hamlets Health Care Unison in east London, says, "Candy and Dave have been at the heart of every important battle for

health workers and to defend the NHS for many years.

"In 1987 our NUPE union branches, together with three other London hospitals, linked up to launch a series of strikes led by student nurses.

"This action spread across London and every major city and pushed the TUC to call a national demo to protest against Tory attacks on the health service.

"Here in east London we are again moving towards industrial action to secure NHS pay and conditions for cleaners, porters and catering workers exploited by private contractors.

"As always, Candy and Dave have been a constant source of support and solidarity. It's outrageous that they should be expelled for the crime of being serious about fighting PFI."

Tony Staunton, the chair of Plymouth Unison, says, "Candy and Dave have been an inspiration to Unison branches across the country."

"Their organisation of the fight at UCLH gave us the blueprint for beating back cuts and privatisation in Plymouth.

"Dave came down and addressed our members' meetings. Candy told us how they had organised.

"Together they showed us we could take strike action, and we did, and we won!

"They should get national awards, not abuse. Now it's our turn to support them."

'WE ARE SHOCKED AND OUTRAGED'

UNISON MEMBERS at UCLH have been shocked and outraged, and some moved to tears of anger and frustration, at this attack on our branch officers.

We believe it is a politically motivated and vindictive sentence.

We had been led to believe from informal discussions that a three-year ban from office was a likely sentence.

For the biggest public sector union to expel two leading branch activists for leading a strike against privatisation which won major concessions is unbelievable.

At a time when privatisation is high on the government's agenda and a fightback is needed more than ever, it seems that the trade union officials are more loyal to Labour than to their own membership.

If Dave Prentis thinks he has tamed the beast by cutting its head off he can think again.

We were incensed when union officials called us into a meeting last week at the TUC. Union officials faced

24 angry stewards who told them they had a nerve not to come and see us.

We told them we would be launching a public campaign to reinstate Candy and Dave.

We have worked alongside Candy and Dave for several years.

They represent the best aspects of a public sector trade union, always prepared to fight the hardest for and with our members against privatisation and for the best conditions for all health service workers.

In fighting for justice for Candy and Dave we will continue in the best traditions of UCLH Unison in opposing any form of attack on our members' pay and conditions, and maintain a strong fighting union branch."

TERRY ALLEN (portering steward), GLENN BRANAGAN (healthcare assistant steward), PHIL HOWELLS (nurse, intensive care steward), SAM PHILPOTT (nurse at the Heart Hospital, steward), JANET MAIDEN (nurse and assistant branch secretary UCH)

• THESE expulsions are a scandal at a time when we face so many other things to fight against—against privatisation, against the war, and for a living wage.

The only way this expulsion can be interpreted is as a spiteful and vindictive move.

Someone decided this was going to be a show trial and they handed out the ultimate punishment.

I have had my political differences with Candy and Dave.

But I've worked with Candy for two years since she was elected as deputy convenor of London Unison. Candy has given 100 percent and has carried great responsibility admirably in what have been difficult circumstances.

The opposition to this deliberately spiteful move goes right across the political spectrum.

I'm committed to doing everything possible to fight for the reinstatement of Candy and Dave."

GEOFF MARTIN, convenor London Region Unison



• I WAS very shocked to hear that Candy and Dave had been expelled.

It is a savage penalty, especially since there is strong doubt about the seriousness of the "offence".

I have a lot of respect for the way that Candy and Dave have fought for and organised with the members in their branch.

If the expulsion cannot be rescinded then they should immediately be allowed to rejoin Unison."

CAROLINE BEDALE, member of Unison's health group executive

• I HAVE difficulty believing that two leading activists have been expelled for leading a fight against privatisation.

Many of us in Unison thought that the witch-hunt of the left was over. Many ordinary members will be wondering, what the hell is going on?

There should be a major campaign for their reinstatement."

KENNY BELL, deputy convenor Northern Region Unison



All quotes in a personal capacity



DAVE CARR (centre) with protesting health workers from UCLH

Socialist Worker

Murdoch's filthy rag is the real threat to public health

Doctors slam *Sun's* lies about refugees

by HELEN SHOOTER

THE *SUN* newspaper is putting people's lives at risk. Billionaire Rupert Murdoch's rag ran a scare story about refugees "bringing deadly diseases into Britain" on Friday of last week.

It says the rise in HIV/AIDS and TB cases is down to refugees and immigrants. The *Sun* is trying to make cheap, racist propaganda out of serious diseases.

This same paper peddled the dangerous myth that "straight sex cannot give you AIDS" in November 1989. The Press Council forced it to run an apology on its editorial page.

The *Sun* fed ignorance and prejudice that cost lives.

It now wants us to believe that AIDS and TB are an "immigrant plague".

Kent has been at the centre of the anti-refugee storm. A Home Office pilot scheme there screened 5,000 refugees for TB over the last eight months. It has not found a single person with TB.

The medical checks revealed evidence of gunshot wounds, whippings and beatings, and injuries from long, often dangerous journeys.

Vivienne Nathanson, head of ethics for the British Medical Association (BMA), has spoken out against scapegoating refugees.

She says that, while refugees are blamed for bringing in diseases, their health was worse two or three years after arriving in Britain.

"We are failing some very vulnerable people, whose health is deteriorating rather than improving in the safety of the UK," she said in a BMA report published last October.

She highlights poor housing for making refugees' health problems worse.

She argued that there should be voluntary health checks for refugees, not compulsory ones like the *Sun* is demanding.

"You can't force people to have healthcare. Very many of them will have seen people wearing white coats as part of the state apparatus that kills and tortures people," she pointed out.

Dr John Coakley, medical director at Homerton Hospital in east London, told *Socialist Worker*, "The *Sun's* articles are nasty, racist nonsense."



Picture: MATT SAYWELL

MANY PEOPLE are disgusted by the *Sun's* anti-refugee and pro-war campaigns

The highest incidence of TB in Britain is in east London and the City. The number of people in Britain with TB is rising, from 5,000 formal notifications in 1987 to 7,000 last year. It is still very rare.

Dr Coakley says, "In the overall context of public health TB is not a huge issue. But it is a very nasty problem.

"It is mainly about overcrowding and

poverty. Most medical people accept that.

"Immigrants and refugees are not likely to be people who have lived in affluent suburbs.

"Say a family comes over here and are put in a small bedsit. If one has TB they will very rapidly spread it to the others.

"We should ensure refugees have access to good quality healthcare, rather

than dumping them on an estate.

"One solution is to stick them in the suburbs—that would be better for public health. But it would hardly go down well with the right wing papers!

"If we are going to get steamed up about public health, why not about unemployment, poverty, housing, deprivation, malnutrition, pollution, and decent

public transport?

"These have a much greater impact on public health.

"But what is happening instead is part of the general nastiness against refugees. It's an excuse to have a go at people who are pretty desperate, who have a bad enough deal as it is."

"An asylum seeker with AIDS or HIV poses no greater threat than anyone else in the general population," said a spokesperson for the Terence Higgins Trust AIDS charity.

"The question is not whether refugees are bringing in AIDS. There is a home-grown epidemic and a global epidemic.

"The *Sun* is quoting 54,000 people as having HIV in Britain. The figure for sub-Saharan Africa is 29.5 million people.

"Instituting compulsory testing is the least effective way to combat rising rates of HIV infection.

"It is not cost effective, or effective at all. Countries with compulsory testing have failed to halt the rise. In the US there is a ban on visitors with HIV. It now has the highest rates of new infections.

"What the government needs to do is provide good consistent sex education. A large proportion of sexually transmitted infections are among 16 to 19 year olds. Chlamydia and gonorrhoea infection rates have doubled since 1995."

The *Sun* has quoted *Times* columnist Anthony Browne as an "immigration expert". He claims refugees are a "huge expense to the NHS".

Browne doesn't even think there should be an NHS. "We must abolish the NHS as we know it, abandon our unique obsession that all healthcare should be free," he says.

He helped set up the bogus group Migration Watch. This is run by two men who worked for Margaret Thatcher's Tory government. It has been pumping out scare stories about refugees.

The *Sun* has a history of scapegoating every vulnerable group in society, from single parents to migrant workers who were invited to Britain in the 1950s to do jobs no one else wanted.

Now the *Sun* is targeting refugees, including those from Iraq, while backing Bush and Blair's war on their country.

No one should fall for its lies.

■The Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers is circulating an open letter against the media's hysteria over refugees. Phone 07941 566 183 or go to www.defend-asylum.org

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